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THE

WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN WESLEY.

IN TEN VOLUMES.

VOLUME VI.

CONTAINING,

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SERMON XLIII.

ON WANDERING THOUGHTS.

"*Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of* CHRIST."
2 CORINTHIANS x. 4.

1. BUT will God so "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," that no wandering thought will find a place in the mind, even while we remain in the body? So some have vehemently maintained: yea, have affirmed, that none are perfected in love, unless they are so far perfected in understanding, that all wandering thoughts are done away: unless, not only every affection and temper be holy, and just, and good, but every individual thought wichh arises in the mind, be wise and regular.

2. This is a question of no small importance. For how many of those who fear God, yea, and love him, perhaps with all their hearts, have been greatly distressed on this account! How many, by not understanding it right, have not only been distressed, but greatly hurt in their souls! Cast into unprofitable, yea, mischievous reasonings, such as slackened their motion towards God, and weakened them in running the race set before them! Nay, many, through misapprehensions of this very thing, have cast away the precious gift of God. They have been induced, first, to doubt of, and then to deny the work God had wrought in their souls; and hereby have grieved the Spirit of God, till he withdrew and left them in utter darkness.

3. How is it, then, that amidst the abundance of books which have been lately published almost on all subjects, we should have none upon wandering thoughts? At least none that will at all satisfy a calm and serious mind? In order to do this in some degree, I purpose to inquire,

I. What are the several sorts of wandering thoughts?

II. What are the general occasions of them?

III. Which of them are sinful, and which not?

IV. Which of them we may expect and pray to be delivered from?

I. 1. I purpose to inquire, First, What are the several sorts of wandering thoughts? The particular sorts are innumerable; but, in general, they are of two sorts, thoughts that wander from God, and thoughts that wander from the particular point we have in hand.

2. With regard to the former, all our thoughts are naturally of this kind. For they are continually wandering from God: we think nothing about him. God is not in all our thoughts: we are one and all, as the apostle observes, "without God in the world." We think of what we love: but we do not love God: therefore, we think not of him. Or, if we are now and then constrained to think of him for a time, yet as we have no pleasure therein, nay, rather, as these thoughts are not only insipid, but distasteful and irksome to us, we drive them out as soon as we can, and return to what we love to think of. So that the world and the things of the world, what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on; what we shall see, what we shall hear, what we shall gain; how we shall please our senses or our imagination, take up all our time, and engross all our thoughts. So long, therefore, as we love the world, that is, so long as we are in our natural state, all our thoughts, from morning to evening, and from evening to morning, are no other than wandering thoughts.

3. But many times we are not only "without God in the world," but also fighting against him: as there is in every man by nature a "carnal mind which is enmity against God:" no wonder, therefore, that men abound with unbelieving thoughts; either saying in their hearts, there is no God, or questioning, if not denying his power or wisdom, his mercy, or justice, or holiness. No wonder, that they so often doubt of his providence, at least, of its extending to all events; or that even though they allow it, they still entertain murmuring or repining thoughts. Nearly related to these, and frequently connected with them, are proud and vain imaginations. Again: sometimes they are taken up with angry, malicious, or revengeful thoughts: at other times, with airy scenes of pleasure, whether of sense or imagination; whereby the earthy, sensual mind, becomes more earthy and sensual still. Now, by all these they make flat war with God; these are wandering thoughts of the highest kind.

4. Widely different from these are the other sort of wandering thoughts: in which the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point it had then in view. For instance: I sit down to consider those words in the verse preceding the text, "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God." I think, "this ought to be the case with all who are called Christians. But how far is it otherwise! Look round into almost every part of what is termed the Christian world! What manner of weapons are these using? In what kind of warfare are they engaged,

> 'While men, like fiends, each other tear
> In all the hellish rage of war!'

See how these Christians love one another! Wherein are they preferable to Turks and Pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or heathens, which is not found among

Christians also?" And thus my mind runs off, before I am aware, from one circumstance to another. Now all these are, in some sense, wandering thoughts. For although they do not wander from God, much less fight against him, yet they do wander from the particular point I had in view.

II. Such is the nature, such are the sorts (to speak rather usefully, than philosophically) of wandering thoughts. But what are the general occasions of them? This we are, in the second place, to consider.

1. And it is easy to observe, that the occasion of the former sort of thoughts, which oppose or wander from God, are, in general, sinful tempers. For instance: Why *is not God in all the thoughts*, in any of the thoughts of a natural man? For a plain reason; be he rich or poor, learned or unlearned, he is an atheist: (though not vulgarly so called;) he neither knows nor loves God. Why are his thoughts continually wandering after the world? Because he is an idolater. He does not indeed worship an image, or bow down to the stock of a tree: yet is he sunk into equally damnable idolatry: he loves, that is, worships the world. He seeks happiness in the things that are seen, in the pleasures that perish in the using. Why is it that his thoughts are perpetually wandering from the very end of his being, the knowledge of God in Christ? Because he is an unbeliever; because he has no faith, or at least, no more than a devil. So all these wandering thoughts easily and naturally spring from that evil root of unbelief.

2. The case is the same in other instances; pride, anger, revenge, vanity, lust, covetousness, every one of them occasions thoughts suitable to its own nature. And so does every sinful temper, of which the human mind is capable. The particulars it is hardly possible, nor is it needful, to enumerate. It suffices to observe, that as many evil tempers as find a place in any soul, so many ways that soul will depart from God, by the worst kind of wandering thoughts.

3. The occasions of the latter kind of wandering thoughts, are exceedingly various. Multitudes of them are occasioned by the natural union between the soul and body. How immediately and how deeply is the understanding affected by a diseased body! Let but the blood move irregularly in the brain, and all regular thinking is at an end. Raging madness ensues, and then farewell to all evenness of thought. Yea, let only the spirits be hurried or agitated to a certain degree, and a temporary madness, a delirium, prevents all settled thought. And is not the same irregularity of thought, in a measure, occasioned by every nervous disorder? So does "the corruptible body press down the soul, and cause it to muse about many things."

4. But does it only cause this in the time of sickness, of preternatural disorder? Nay, but more or less, at all times, even in a state of perfect health. Let a man be ever so healthy, he will be more or less delirious, every four and twenty hours. For does he not sleep?

And while he sleeps, is he not liable to dream? And who then is master of his own thoughts, or able to preserve the order and consistency of them? Who can then keep them fixed to any one point, or prevent their wandering from pole to pole.

5 But suppose we are awake, are we always so awake, that we can steadily govern our thoughts? Are we not unavoidably exposed to contrary extremes, by the very nature of this machine, the body? Sometimes we are too heavy, too dull and languid, to pursue any chain of thought. Sometimes, on the other hand, we are too lively. The imagination, without leave, starts to and fro, and carries us away, hither and thither, whether we will or not: and all this, from the merely natural motion of the spirits, or vibration of the nerves.

6. Farther: How many wanderings of thought may arise, from those various associations of our ideas, which are made entirely without our knowledge, and independently on our choice! How these connexions are formed, we cannot tell: but they are formed in a thousand different manners. Nor is it in the power of the wisest or holiest of men, to break those associations, or to prevent what is the necessary consequence of them, as is matter of daily observation. Let the fire but touch one end of the train, and it immediately runs on to the other.

7. Once more: Let us fix our attention as studiously as we are able on any subject, yet let either pleasure or pain arise, especially if it be intense, and it will demand our immediate attention, and attach our thought to itself. It will interrupt the steadiest contemplation, and divert the mind from its favourite subject.

8. These occasions of wandering thoughts lie within, and are wrought into our very nature. But they will likewise naturally and necessarily arise, from the various impulses of outward objects. Whatever strikes upon the organs of sense, the eye or ear, will raise a perception in the mind. And accordingly, whatever we see, or hear, will break in upon our former train of thoughts. Every man, therefore, that does any thing in our sight, or speaks any thing in our hearing, occasions our mind to wander, more or less, from the point it was thinking of before.

9. And there is no question but those evil spirits, who are continually seeking whom they may devour, make use of all the foregoing occasions, to hurry and distract our minds. Sometimes by one, sometimes by another of these means, they will harass and perplex us, and so far as God permits, interrupt our thoughts, particularly when they are engaged on the best subjects. Nor is this at all strange: they well understand the very springs of thought, and know on which of the bodily organs, the imagination, the understanding, and every other faculty of the mind, more immediately depends. And hereby they know, how, by affecting those organs, to affect the operations dependent on them. Add to this, that they can inject a thousand thoughts, without any of the preceding means:

it being as natural for spirit to act upon spirit, as for matter to act upon matter. These things being considered, we cannot wonder, that our thoughts so often wander from any point which we have in view.

III. 1. What kind of wandering thoughts are sinful, and what not, is the third thing to be inquired into. And, First, All those thoughts which wander from God, which leave him no room in our minds, are undoubtedly sinful. For all these imply practical Atheism, and by these we are without God in the world. And so much more are all those which are contrary to God, which imply opposition, or enmity to him. Such are all murmuring, discontented thoughts, which say, in effect, We will not have thee to rule over us: all unbelieving thoughts, whether with regard to his being, his attributes, or his providence. I mean his particular providence over all things, as well as all persons in the universe: that without which "not a sparrow falls to the ground," by which "the hairs of our head are all numbered." For as to a general providence, (vulgarly so called,) contradistinguished from a particular, it is only a decent, well-sounding word, which means just nothing.

2. Again: All thoughts which spring from sinful tempers, are undoubtedly sinful. Such, for instance, are those that spring from a revengeful temper, from pride, or lust, or vanity. "An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Therefore, if the tree be evil, so must the fruit be also.

3. And so must those be, which either produce or feed any sinful temper: those which either give rise to pride or vanity, to anger or love of the world, or confirm and increase these or any other unholy temper, passion, or affections. For, not only whatever flows from evil is evil, but also whatever leads to it; whatever tends to alienate the soul from God, and to make or keep it earthly, sensual, and devilish.

4. Hence, even those thoughts, which are occasioned by weakness or disease, by the natural mechanism of the body, or by the laws of vital union, however innocent they may be in themselves, do nevertheless become sinful, when they either produce or cherish and increase in us any sinful temper: suppose the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. In like manner, the wandering thoughts, which are occasioned by the words or actions of other men, if they cause or feed any wrong disposition, then commence sinful. And the same we may observe of those which are suggested or injected by the devil. When they minister to any earthly or devilish temper, (which they do, whenever we give place to them, and thereby make them our own,) then they are equally sinful, with the tempers to which they minister.

5. But, abstracting from these cases, wandering thoughts, in the latter sense of the word, that is, thoughts wherein our understanding wanders from the point it has in view, are no more sinful than the motion of blood in our veins, or of the spirits in our brain. If they arise from an infirm constitution, or from some accidental weakness or

distemper, they are as innocent as it is to have a weak constitution, or a distempered body. And surely no one doubts but a bad state of nerves, a fever of any kind, and either a transient or a lasting delirium, may consist with perfect innocence. And if they should arise in a soul which is united to an healthful body, either from the natural union between the body and soul, or from any of ten thousand changes, which may occur in the organs of the body, that minister to thought: in any of these cases they are as perfectly innocent as the causes from which they spring. And so they are when they spring from the casual, involuntary association of our ideas.

6. If our thoughts wander from the point we had in view, by means of other men, variously affecting our senses, they are equally innocent still: for it is no more a sin, to understand what I see and hear, and in many cases cannot help seeing, hearing, and understanding, than it is to have eyes and ears. "But if the devil inject wandering thoughts, are not those thoughts evil?" They are troublesome, and in that sense evil; but they are not sinful. I do not know that he spoke to our Lord with an audible voice: perhaps he spoke to his heart only, when he said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But whether he spoke inwardly or outwardly, our Lord doubtless understood what he said. He had therefore a thought correspondent to those words. But was it a sinful thought? We know it was not. In him was no sin, either in action, or word, or thought. Nor is there any sin in a thousand thoughts of the same kind, which Satan may inject into any of our Lord's followers.

7. It follows, that none of these wandering thoughts (whatever unwary persons have affirmed, thereby grieving whom the Lord had not grieved) are inconsistent with perfect love. Indeed if they were, then not only sharp pain, but sleep itself would be inconsistent with it:—sharp pain; for whenever this supervenes, whatever we were before thinking of, it will interrupt our thinking, and of course draw our thoughts into another channel:—yea, and sleep itself, as it is a state of insensibility and stupidity: and such as is generally mixed with thoughts wandering over the earth, loose, wild, and incoherent. Yet certainly these are consistent with perfect love: so then are all wandering thoughts of this kind.

IV. 1. From what has been observed, it is easy to give a clear answer to the last question, What kind of wandering thoughts may we expect and pray to be delivered from?

From the former sort of wandering thoughts, those wherein the heart wanders from God; from all that are contrary to his will, or that leave us without God in the world, every one that is perfect in love, is unquestionably delivered. This deliverance, therefore, we may expect: this we may, we ought to pray for. Wandering thoughts of this kind imply unbelief, if not enmity against God. But both of these he will destroy, will bring utterly to an end. And indeed, from all sinful wandering thoughts we shall be absolutely delivered. All that are perfected in love are delivered from these; else

they were not saved from sin. Men and devils will tempt them all manner of ways. But they cannot prevail over them.

2. With regard to the latter sort of wandering thoughts, the case is widely different. Till the cause be removed, we cannot in reason expect the effect should cease. But the causes or occasions of these will remain, as long as we remain in the body. So long, therefore, we have all reason to believe, the effects will remain also.

3. To be more particular. Suppose a soul, however holy, to dwell in a distempered body. Suppose the brain be so thoroughly disordered, as that raging madness follows: will not all the thoughts be wild and unconnected, as long as that disorder continues? Suppose a fever occasions that temporary madness, which we term a delirium, can there be any just connexion of thought, till that delirium be removed? Yea, suppose what is called a nervous disorder to rise to so high a degree, as to occasion, at least, a partial madness, will there not be a thousand wandering thoughts? And must not these irregular thoughts continue, as long as the disorder which occasions them?

4. Will not the case be the same, with regard to those thoughts which necessarily arise from violent pain? They will more or less continue, while that pain continues, by the inviolable order of nature. This order likewise will obtain, where the thoughts are disturbed, broken, or interrupted, by any defect of the apprehension, judgment, or imagination, flowing from the natural constitution of the body. And how many interruptions may spring from the unaccountable and involuntary association of our ideas? Now all these are directly or indirectly caused by the corruptible body pressing down the mind. Nor therefore can we expect them to be removed, till "this corruptible shall put on incorruption."

5. And then only, when we lie down in the dust, shall we be delivered from those wandering thoughts which are occasioned by what we see and hear, among those by whom we are now surrounded. To avoid these, we must go out of the world. For as long as we remain therein, as long as there are men and women round about us, and we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, the things which we daily see and hear, will certainly affect our minds, and will more or less break in upon and interrupt our preceding thoughts.

6. And as long as evil spirits roam to and fro in a miserable, disordered world, so long they will assault (whether they can prevail or not) every inhabitant of flesh and blood. They will trouble even those whom they cannot destroy: they will attack, if they cannot conquer. And from these attacks, of our restless, unwearied enemies, we must not look for an entire deliverance, till we are lodged "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

7. To sum up the whole: To expect deliverance from those wandering thoughts, which are occasioned by evil spirits, is to expect that the devil should die or fall asleep; or at least should no more go about as a roaring lion. To expect deliverance from those which are oc-

casioned by other men, is to expect either that men should cease from the earth; or that we should be absolutely secluded from them, and have no intercourse with them: or that having eyes we should not see, neither hear with our ears, but be as senseless as stocks or stones. And to pray for deliverance from those which are occasioned by the body, is in effect to pray that we may leave the body. Otherwise it is praying for impossibilities and absurdities; praying that God would reconcile contradictions, by continuing our union with a corruptible body, without the natural, necessary consequences of that union. It is as if we should pray to be angels and men, mortal and immortal at the same time. Nay, but when that which is immortal is come, mortality is done away.

8. Rather let us pray both with the spirit and with the understanding, that "all these things may work together for our good:" that we may suffer all the infirmities of our nature, all the interruptions of men, all the assaults and suggestions of evil spirits, and in all be "more than conquerors." Let us pray, that we may be delivered from all sin, that both root and branch may be destroyed: that we may be "cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit," from every evil temper, and word, and work: that we may "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength;" that all the fruits of the Spirit may be found in us; not only love, joy, peace; but also "long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; fidelity, meekness, temperance." Pray that all "these things may flourish and abound, may increase in you more and more, till an abundant entrance be ministered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON XLIV.

ON SATAN'S DEVICES.

"*We are not ignorant of his devices.*"—2 CORINTHIANS ii. 11.

1. THE devices whereby the subtle god of this world labours to destroy the children of God, or, at least, to torment whom he cannot destroy, to perplex and hinder them in running the race which is set before them, are numberless as the stars of heaven, or the sand upon the sea-shore. But it is of one of them only that I now propose to speak, (although exerted in various ways) whereby he endeavours to divide the gospel against itself, and by one part of it to overthrow the other.

2. The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the hearts

of all that repent and believe the gospel, is no other than "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Every babe in Christ knows we are made partakers of these, the very hour that we believe in Jesus. But these are only the first-fruits of his Spirit: the harvest is not yet. Although these blessings are inconceivably great, yet we trust to see greater than these. We trust to love the Lord our God, not only as we do now, with a weak though sincere affection, but "with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength." We look for power to "rejoice evermore, to pray without ceasing, and in every thing to give thanks;" knowing, "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us."

3. We expect to be "made perfect in love;" in that which *casts out* all painful *fear*, and all desire but that of glorifying him we love, of loving and serving him more and more. We look for such an increase in the experimental knowledge and love of God our Saviour, as will enable us always "to walk in the light, as he is in the light." We believe the whole *mind* will be in us *which was also in Christ Jesus:* that we shall love every man, so as to be ready "to lay down our life for his sake:" so as, by this love, to be freed from anger, and pride, and from every unkind affection. We expect to be "cleansed from all our idols, from all filthiness, whether of flesh or spirit:" to be "saved from all our uncleannesses," inward or outward; to be "purified, as he is pure."

4. We trust in his promise who cannot lie, that the time will surely come, when in every word and work we shall do his blessed will on earth, as it is done in heaven: when all our conversation shall be seasoned with salt, all meet to minister grace to the hearers: when, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, it shall be done to the glory of God: when all our words and deeds shall be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God, even to God the Father, through him."

5. Now this is the grand device of Satan, to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or, at least, to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. It is therefore my present design, First, To point out the several ways whereby he endeavours this: and, Secondly, To observe how we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may rise the higher, by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

I. 1. I am, First, to point out the several ways whereby Satan endeavours to destroy the first work of God in the soul, or, at least, to hinder its increase, by our expectation of that greater work. And, 1. He endeavours to damp our joy in the Lord, by the consideration of our own vileness, sinfulness, unworthiness; added to this, that there must be a far greater change than is yet, or we cannot see the Lord. If we knew we must remain as we are, even to the day of our death, we might possibly draw a kind of comfort, poor as it was, from that necessity. But as we know we need not remain in this state, as we are assured there is a greater change to come, and that unless sin be all done away in this life, we cannot see God in glory; that

subtle adversary often damps the joy we should otherwise feel in what we have already attained, by a perverse representation of what we have not attained, and the absolute necessity of attaining it. So that we cannot rejoice in what we have, because there is more which we have not. We cannot rightly taste the goodness of God, who hath done so great things for us, because there are so much greater things, which, as yet, he hath not done. Likewise, the deeper conviction God works in us of our present unholiness, and the more vehement desire we feel in our heart of the entire holiness he hath promised, the more are we tempted to think lightly of the present gifts of God, and to undervalue what we have already received, because of what we have not received.

2. If he can prevail thus far, if he can damp our joy, he will soon attack our peace also. He will suggest, "Are you fit to see God? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. How then can you flatter yourself, so as to imagine he beholds you with approbation? God is holy: you are unholy. What communion hath light with darkness? How is it possible that you, unclean as you are, should be in a state of acceptance with God? You see indeed the mark, the prize of your high calling; but do you not see it is afar off? How can you presume, then, to think, that all your sins are already blotted out? How can this be, until you are brought nearer to God, until you bear more resemblance to him?" Thus will he endeavour, not only to shake your peace, but even to overturn the very foundation of it: to bring you back, by insensible degrees, to the point, from whence you set out first, even to seek for justification by works, or by your own righteousness: to make something in you the ground of your acceptance, or, at least, necessarily previous to it.

3. Or, if we hold fast, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ;" and, I am "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption which is in Jesus:" yet he will not cease to urge, "But the tree is known by its fruits. And have you the fruits of justification? Is that mind in you which was in Christ Jesus? Are you dead unto sin, and alive unto righteousness? Are you made conformable to the death of Christ, and do you know the power of his resurrection?" And then, comparing the small fruits we feel in our souls, with the fulness of the promises, we shall be ready to conclude, Surely God hath not said, that my sins are forgiven me! Surely I have not received the remission of my sins; for what lot have I among them that are sanctified?

4. More especially in the time of sickness and pain, he will press this with all his might: "Is it not the word of him that cannot lie, Without holiness no man shall see the Lord? But you are not holy; you know it well; you know holiness is the full image of God: and how far is this above, out of your sight? You cannot attain unto it. Therefore, all your labour has been in vain. All these things you have suffered in vain. You have spent your strength for naught. You are yet in your sins, and must, therefore, perish at the last." And thus, if your eye be not steadily fixed on him who hath borne all

your sins, he will bring you again under that *fear of death*, whereby you was so long *subject unto bondage:* and, by this means, impair, if not wholly destroy, your peace, as well as joy in the Lord.

5. But his master-piece of subtlety is still behind. Not content to strike at your peace and joy, he will carry his attempts farther yet: he will level his assault against your righteousness also. He will endeavour to shake, yea, if it be possible, to destroy the holiness you have already received, by your very expectation of receiving more, of attaining all the image of God.

6. The manner wherein he attempts this, may partly appear from what has been already observed. For, first, by striking at our joy in the Lord, he strikes likewise at our holiness: seeing joy in the Holy Ghost is a precious means of promoting every holy temper; a choice instrument of God, whereby he carries on much of his work in a believing soul. And it is a considerable help, not only to inward, but also to outward holiness. It strengthens our hands to go on in the work of faith, and in the labour of love; manfully to "fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life." It is peculiarly designed of God to be a balance both against inward and outward sufferings: to "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees." Consequently, whatever damps our joy in the Lord, proportionably obstructs our holiness. And, therefore, so far as Satan shakes our joy, he hinders our holiness also.

7. The same effect will ensue, if he can, by any means, either destroy or shake our peace. For the peace of God is another precious means of advancing the image of God in us. There is scarce a greater help to holiness than this, a continual tranquillity of spirit, the evenness of a mind stayed upon God; a calm repose in the blood of Jesus. And without this, it is scarce possible to grow in grace, and in the vital knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For all fear (unless the tender, filial fear) freezes and benumbs the soul. It binds up all the springs of spiritual life, and stops all motion of the heart toward God. And doubt, as it were, bemires the soul, so that it sticks fast in the deep clay. Therefore, in the same proportion as either of these prevails, our growth in holiness is hindered.

8. At the same time that our wise adversary endeavours to make our conviction of the necessity of perfect love, an occasion of shaking our peace by doubts and fears, he endeavours to weaken, if not destroy, our faith. Indeed, these are inseparably connected, so that they must stand or fall together. So long as faith subsists, we remain in peace; our heart stands fast, while it believes in the Lord. But if we let go our faith, our filial confidence in a loving, pardoning God, our peace is at an end, the very foundation on which it stood being overthrown. And this is the only foundation of holiness, as well as of peace; consequently, whatever strikes at this, strikes at the very root of all holiness: for without this faith, without an abiding sense, that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me; without a continuing conviction, that God, for Christ's sake, is merciful to me a sinner, it is impossible that I should love

God: "We love him, because he first loved us," and in proportion to the strength and clearness of our conviction, that he hath loved us, and accepted us in his Son. And unless we love God, it is not possible that we should love our neighbour as ourselves: nor, consequently, that we should have any right affections, either toward God, or toward man. It evidently follows, that whatever weakens our faith, must, in the same degree, obstruct our holiness. And this is not only the most effectual, but also the most compendious way of destroying all holiness. Seeing it does not affect merely some one Christian temper, some single grace or fruit of the Spirit, but, so far as it succeeds, tears up the very root of the whole work of God.

9. No marvel, therefore, that the ruler of the darkness of this world should here put forth all his strength. And so we find by experience. For it is far easier to conceive, than it is to express, the unspeakable violence wherewith this temptation is frequently urged on them, who hunger and thirst after righteousness. When they see in a strong and clear light, on the one hand, the desperate wickedness of their own hearts; on the other hand, the unspotted holiness to which they are called in Christ Jesus: on the one hand, the depth of their own corruption, of their total alienation from God; on the other, the height of the glory of God, that image of the Holy One, wherein they are to be renewed: there is, many times, no spirit left in them; they could almost cry out, With God this is impossible! They are ready to give up both faith and hope, to cast away that very confidence, whereby they are to overcome all things, and to do all things, through Christ strengthening them: whereby, "after they have done the will of God, they are to receive the promise."

10. And if they "hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end," they shall undoubtedly receive the promise of God, reaching through both time and eternity. But here is another snare laid for our feet. While we earnestly pant for that part of the promise which is to be accomplished here, "for the glorious liberty of the children of God," we may be led unawares from the consideration of the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. Our eye may be insensibly turned aside from that crown, which the righteous Judge hath promised to give at that day, "to all that love his appearing:" and we may be drawn away from the view of that incorruptible inheritance, which is reserved in heaven for us. But this also would be a loss to our souls, and an obstruction to our holiness. For to walk in the continual sight of our goal, is a needful help in our running the race that is set before us. This it was, the having "respect unto the recompense of the reward," which, of old time, encouraged Moses, rather "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Nay, it is expressly said of a greater than he, that "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame, till he sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Whence

we may easily infer, how much more needful for us is the view of that joy set before us, that we may endure whatever cross the wisdom of God lays upon us, and press on through holiness to glory.

11. But while we are reaching to this, as well as to that glorious liberty which is preparatory to it, we may be in danger of falling into another snare of the devil, whereby he labours to entangle the children of God. We may take too much *thought for to-morrow*, so as to neglect the improvement of to-day. We may so expect perfect love, as not to use that, which is already shed abroad in our hearts. There have not been wanting instances of those, who have greatly suffered hereby. They were so taken up with what they were to receive hereafter, as utterly to neglect what they had already received. In expectation of having five talents more, they buried their one talent in the earth. At least, they did not improve it as they might have done, to the glory of God, and the good of their own souls.

12. Thus does the subtle adversary of God and man endeavour to make void the counsel of God, by dividing the gospel against itself, and making one part of it overthrow the other: while the first work of God in the soul is destroyed by the expectation of his perfect work. We have seen several of the ways wherein he attempts this, by cutting off, as it were, the springs of holiness. But this he likewise does more directly, by making that blessed hope an occasion of unholy tempers.

13. Thus, whenever our heart is eagerly athirst for all the great and precious promises; when we pant after the fulness of God, as the hart after the water-brooks; when our soul breaketh out in fervent desire, "Why are his chariot-wheels so long a coming?" he will not neglect the opportunity of tempting us to murmur against God. He will use all his wisdom, and all his strength, if, haply, in an unguarded hour, we may be influenced to repine at our Lord, for thus delaying his coming. At least, he will labour to excite some degree of fretfulness or impatience: and, perhaps, of envy at those, whom we believe to have already attained the prize of their high calling. He well knows, that by giving way to any of these tempers, we are pulling down the very thing we would build up. By thus following after perfect holiness, we become more unholy than before. Yea, there is great danger that our last state should be worse than the first: like them of whom the Apostle speaks, in those dreadful words, "It had been better they had never known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them."

14. And from hence he hopes to reap another advantage, even to bring up an evil report of the good way. He is sensible, how few are able to distinguish (and too many are not willing so to do) between the accidental abuse, and the natural tendency of a doctrine. These, therefore, will he continually blend together, with regard to the doctrine of Christian perfection: in order to prejudice the minds of unwary men against the glorious promises of God. And how fre-

quently, how generally, I had almost said, how universally, has he prevailed herein! For who is there that observes any of these accidental ill effects of this doctrine, and does not immediately conclude, This is its natural tendency; and does not readily cry out, "See, these are the fruits (meaning the natural, necessary fruits) of such doctrine?" Not so. They are fruits which may accidentally spring from the abuse of a great and precious truth. But the abuse of this, or any other Scriptural doctrine, does by no means destroy its use. Neither can the unfaithfulness of man, perverting his right way, make the promise of God of none effect. No: let God be true, and every man a liar. The word of the Lord, it shall stand. "Faithful is He that hath promised: He also will do it." Let us not then be "removed from the hope of the gospel." Rather let us observe, which was the second thing proposed, How we may retort these fiery darts of the wicked one: how we may rise the higher by what he intends for an occasion of our falling.

II. 1. And, first, Does Satan endeavour to damp your joy in the Lord, by the consideration of your sinfulness; added to this, that without entire, universal holiness, no man can see the Lord? You may cast back this dart upon his own head, while, through the grace of God, the more you feel of your own vileness, the more you rejoice in confident hope, that all this shall be done away. While you hold fast this hope, every evil temper you feel, though you hate it with a perfect hatred, may be a mean, not of lessening your humble joy, but rather of increasing it. "This and this," you may say, "shall likewise perish from the presence of the Lord. Like as the wax melteth at the fire, so shall this melt away before his face." By this mean, the greater the change is, which remains to be wrought in your soul, the more may you triumph in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of your salvation; who hath done so great things for you already, and will do so much greater things than these.

2. Secondly, The more vehemently he assaults your peace with that suggestion, "God is holy, you are unholy: you are immensely distant from that holiness, without which you cannot see God: How then can you be in the favour of God? How can you fancy you are justified?" Take the more earnest heed to hold fast that, "Not by works of righteousness which I have done, I am found in him:" I am "accepted in the beloved;" not having my own righteousness, (as the cause, either in whole, or in part, of my justification before God,) "but that which is by faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." O, bind this about your neck: write it upon the table of your heart. Wear it as a bracelet on your arm, as frontlets between your eyes: I am "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Value and esteem, more and more, that precious truth, "By grace we are saved, through faith." Admire, more and more, the free grace of God, in so loving the world, as to give "his only Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." So shall the sense of the sinfulness you feel on the one hand, and of the holiness you ex-

pect on the other, both contribute to establish your peace, and make it flow as a river. So shall that peace flow on with an even stream, in spite of all those mountains of ungodliness, which shall become a plain, in the day when the Lord cometh, to take full possession of your heart. Neither will sickness, nor pain, nor the approach of death, occasion any doubt or fear. You know a day, an hour, a moment, with God, is as a thousand years. He cannot be straitened for time, wherein to work whatever remains to be done in your soul. And God's time is always the best time. Therefore, be thou careful for nothing. Only make thy requests known unto him, and that not only without doubt or fear, but with thanksgiving: as being previously assured, he cannot withhold from thee any manner of thing that is good.

3. Thirdly, The more you are tempted to give up your shield, to cast away your faith, your confidence in his love, so much the more take heed that you hold fast that whereunto you have attained. So much the more labour to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Never let that slip, I have "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" and, "the life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Be this thy glory and crown of rejoicing. And see that no one take thy crown. Hold that fast, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." And I now "have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Thus, being filled with all peace and joy in believing, press on in the peace and joy of faith, to the renewal of thy whole soul, in the image of him that created thee. Meanwhile, cry continually to God, that thou mayest see that prize of thy high calling, not as Satan represents it, in a horrid, dreadful shape, but in its genuine, native beauty: not as something that must be, or thou wilt go to hell, but as what may be, to lead thee to heaven. Look upon it as the most desirable gift, which is in all the stores of the rich mercies of God. Beholding it in the true point of light, thou wilt hunger after it more and more: thy whole soul will be athirst for God, and for this glorious conformity to his likeness. And, having received a good hope of this, and strong consolation through grace, thou wilt no more be weary or faint in thy mind, but wilt follow on till thou attain.

4. In the same power of faith, press on to glory. Indeed, this is the same prospect still. God hath joined from the beginning, pardon, holiness, heaven. And why should man put them asunder? O, beware of this! Let not one link of the golden chain be broken. God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven me. He is now renewing me in his own image. Shortly he will make me meet for himself, and take me to stand before his face. I, whom he hath justified through the blood of his Son, being thoroughly sanctified by his Spirit, shall quickly ascend to the "New Jerusalem, the city of the living God." Yet a little while, and I shall "come to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant." How soon will these shadows

flee away, and the day of eternity dawn upon me! How soon shall I drink of "the river of the water of life, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb? There all his servants shall praise him, and shall see his face, and his name shall be upon their foreheads. And no night shall be there; and they have no need of a candle, or the light of the sun. For the Lord God enlighteneth them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

5. And if you thus "taste of the good word, and the powers of the world to come," you will not murmur against God, because you are not yet meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Instead of repining at your not being wholly delivered, you will praise God for thus far delivering you. You will magnify God for what he hath done, and take it as an earnest of what he will do. You will not fret against him, because you are not yet renewed, but bless him because you shall be; and because *now is your salvation* from all sin, *nearer than when you* first *believed.* Instead of uselessly tormenting yourself because the time is not fully come, you will calmly and quietly wait for it, knowing that it "will come, and will not tarry." You may, therefore, the more cheerfully endure as yet, the burden of sin that still remains in you, because it will not always remain. Yet a little while, and it shall be clean gone. Only "tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart, and put thou thy trust in the Lord."

6. And if you see any who appear, (so far as man can judge, but God alone searcheth the hearts,) to be already partakers of their hope, already "made perfect in love: far from envying the grace of God in them, let it rejoice and comfort your heart. Glorify God for their sakes. "If one member is honoured," shall not "all the members rejoice with it?" Instead of jealousy or evil surmising concerning them, praise God for the consolation. Rejoice in having a fresh proof of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling all his promises. And stir yourself up the more, to "apprehend that for which you also are apprehended of Christ Jesus."

7. In order to this, redeem the time. Improve the present moment. Buy up every opportunity of growing in grace, or of doing good. Let not the thought of receiving more grace to-morrow, make you negligent of to-day. You have one talent now. If you expect five more, so much then rather improve that you have. And the more you expect to receive hereafter, the more labour for God now. Sufficient for the day is the grace thereof. God is now pouring his benefits upon you. Now approve yourself a faithful steward of the present grace of God. Whatever may be to-morrow, give all diligence to-day, to "add to your faith, courage,—temperance,—patience,—brotherly-kindness, and—the fear of God," till you attain that pure and perfect love. Let *these things be* now *in you, and abound.* Be not now slothful or unfruitful. "So shall an entrance be ministered unto you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ."

8. Lastly: If in time past you have abused this blessed hope

of being holy, as he is holy, yet do not, therefore, cast it away. Let the abuse cease, the use remain. Use it now to the more abundant glory of God, and profit of your own soul. In steadfast faith, in calm tranquillity of spirit, in full assurance of hope, rejoicing evermore for what God hath done, *press on unto perfection.* Daily growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and going on from strength to strength, in resignation, in patience, in humble thankfulness for what you have attained, and for what you shall attain, run the race set before you, "looking unto Jesus," till, through perfect love, you enter into his glory!

SERMON XLV.

[Preached before the Society for REFORMATION of MANNERS, on Sunday, Jan. 30, 1763, at the Chapel in West-Street, Seven-Dials.]

"*Who will rise up with me against the wicked?*"—PSALM xciv. 16.

1. IN all ages, men, who neither feared God, nor regarded man, have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shown themselves wise in their generation; for by this mean they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father, the devil, than they otherwise could have done. On the other hand, men, who feared God and desired the happiness of their fellow-creatures, have, in every age, found it needful to join together, in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed He himself has instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one spirit. And for this very end He has joined them together, "that He might destroy the works of the devil," first in them that are already united, and by them in all that are round about them.

2. This is the original design of the Church of Christ. It is a body of men compacted together, in order, first, to save each his own soul, then to assist each other in working out their salvation, and afterwards, as far as in them lies, to save all men from present and future misery, to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and set up the kingdom of Christ. And this ought to be the continued care and endeavour of every member of his church. Otherwise he is not

worthy to be called a member thereof, as he is not a living member of Christ.

3. Accordingly this ought to be the constant care and endeavour of all those who are united together in these kingdoms, and are commonly called *The Church of England.* They are united together for this very end, to oppose the devil and all his works, and to wage war against the world and the flesh, his constant and faithful allies. But do they, in fact, answer the end of their union? Are all who style themselves *Members of the Church of England*, heartily engaged in opposing the works of the devil, and fighting against the world and the flesh? Alas, we cannot say this, so far from it, that a great part, I fear, the greater part of them, are themselves *the world*, the people that know not God, to any saving purpose: are indulging day by day, instead of "mortifying the flesh, with its affections and desires;" and doing, themselves, those works of the devil, which they are peculiarly engaged to destroy.

4. There is, therefore, still need, even in this *Christian country*, (as we *courteously* style Great Britain,) yea, in this *Christian church*, (if we may give that title to the bulk of our nation,) of some to *rise up against the wicked*, and join together *against the evil doers.* Nay, there was never more need than there is at this day, for *them that fear the Lord*, to *speak often together*, on this very head, How they may *lift up a standard against the iniquity* which overflows the land. There is abundant cause for all the servants of God, to join together against the works of the devil; with united hearts, and counsels, and endeavours, to make a stand for God, and to repress, as much as in them lies, these "floods of ungodliness."

5. For this end a few persons in London, towards the close of the last century, united together, and, after a while, were termed, *The Society for Reformation of Manners.* And incredible good was done by them, for near forty years. But then, most of the original members, being gone to their reward, those who succeeded them grew faint in their minds, and departed from the work. So that, a few years ago, the Society ceased, nor did any of the kind remain in the kingdom.

6. It is a society of the same nature, which has been lately formed. I purpose to show, First, The *nature* of their design, and the *steps* they have hitherto taken: Secondly, The *excellency* of it, with the various *objections* which have been raised against it: Thirdly, *What manner of men* they ought to be, who engage in such a design: and, Fourthly, With what *Spirit*, and in what *manner* they should proceed, in the prosecution of it. I shall conclude with an *application* both to them, and to all that fear God.

I. 1. I am, First, to show the *nature* of their design, and the *steps* they have hitherto taken.

It was on a Lord's-day in August 1757, that in a small company, who were met for prayer and religious conversation, mention was made of the gross, and open profanation of that sacred day, by persons buying and selling, keeping open shop, tippling in alehouses,

and standing or sitting in the streets, roads, or fields, vending their wares as on common days: especially in Moorfields, which was then full of them every Sunday, from one end to the other. It was considered, what method could be taken, to redress these grievances, and it was agreed, that six of them should, in the morning, wait upon Sir John Fielding for instruction. They did so. He approved of the design, and directed them how to carry it into execution.

2. They first delivered petitions to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, to the Justices sitting at Hick's-Hall, and those in Westminster. And they received much encouragement to proceed.

3. It was next judged proper, to signify their design to many persons of eminent rank, and to the body of the clergy, as well as the ministers of other denominations, belonging to the several churches and meetings, in and about the cities of London and Westminster. And they had the satisfaction to meet with an hearty consent and universal approbation from them.

4. They then printed and dispersed, at their own expense, several thousand books of instruction, to constables and other parish-officers, explaining and enforcing their several duties. And to prevent, as far as possible, the necessity of proceeding to an actual execution of the laws, they likewise printed and dispersed in all parts of the town, dissuasives from Sabbath-breaking, extracts from Acts of Parliament against it, and notices to the offenders.

5. The way being paved by these precautions, it was in the beginning of the year 1758, that after notices delivered again and again, which were as often set at naught, actual informations were made to the Magistrates, against persons profaning the Lord's day. By this mean they, first, cleared the streets of those notorious offenders, who, without any regard either to God or the king, were selling their wares from morning to night. They proceeded to a more difficult attempt, the preventing tippling on the Lord's day, spending the time in alehouses which ought to be spent in the more immediate worship of God. Herein they were exposed to abundance of reproach, to insult and abuse of every kind; having not only the tipplers and those who entertained them, the alehouse-keepers, to contend with, but rich and honourable men, partly the landlords of those alehouse-keepers, partly those who furnished them with drink, and in general all who gained by their sins. Some of these were not only men of substance, but men in authority; nay, in more instances than one, they were the very persons before whom the delinquents were brought. And the treatment they gave those who laid the informations, naturally encouraged *the beasts of the people*, to follow their example, and to use them as fellows not fit to live upon the earth. Hence, they made no scruple, not only to treat them with the basest language, not only to throw at them mud and stones, or whatever came to hand, but many times to beat them without mercy, and to drag them over the stones, or through the kennels. And

that they did not murder them was not for want of will; but the bridle was in their teeth.

6. Having, therefore, received help from God, they went on to restrain bakers likewise, from spending so great a part of the Lord's day, in exercising the works of their calling.* But many of these were more noble than the victuallers. They were so far from resenting this, or looking upon it as an affront, that several, who had been hurried down the stream of custom, to act contrary to their own consciences, sincerely thanked them for their labour, and acknowledged it as a real kindness.

7. In clearing the streets, fields, and alehouses of sabbath-breakers, they fell upon another sort of offenders as mischievous to society as any, namely, gamesters of various kinds. Some of these were of the lowest and vilest class, commonly called gamblers, who made a trade of seizing on young and inexperienced men, and tricking them out of all their money. And after they have beggared them, they frequently teach them the same mystery of iniquity. Several nests of these they have rooted out, and constrained not a few of them honestly to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, and the labour of their hands.

8. Increasing in number and strength, they extended their views, and began, not only to repress profane swearing, but to remove out of our streets, another public nuisance and scandal of the Christian name, common prostitutes. Many of these were stopped in their mad career of audacious wickedness. And, in order to go to the root of the disease, many of the houses that entertained them, have been detected, prosecuted according to law, and totally suppressed. And some of the poor desolate women themselves, though fallen to

"The lowest line of human infamy,"

have acknowledged the gracious providence of God, and broke off their sins by lasting repentance. Several of these have been placed out, and several received into the Magdalen Hospital.

9. If a little digression may be allowed, who can sufficiently admire the wisdom of Divine Providence, in the disposal of the times and seasons, so as to suit one concurrence to another? For instance: Just at a time when many of these poor creatures, being stopped in their course of sin, found a desire of leading a better life, as it were in answer to that sad question, "But if I quit the way I am now in, what can I do to live? For I am not mistress of any trade; and I have no friends that will receive me:" I say, just at this time, God has prepared the Magdalen Hospital. Here those who have no trade, nor any friends to receive them, are received with all tenderness; yea, they may live, and that with comfort, being provided with all things that are needful "for life and godliness."

* They did not mean by this, the restraining them from baking provision for the poor.

10. But to return. The number of persons brought to justice, from August 1757, to August 1762, is 9596

From thence to the present time.

For unlawful gaming, and profane swearing, . . .	40
For Sabbath-breaking, ...	400
Lewd women and keepers of ill houses, ...	550
For offering to sale obscene Prints, ...	2
In all,	10,588

11. In the admission of members into the society, no regard is had to any particular sect or party. Whoever is found, upon inquiry, to be a good man, is readily admitted. And none who has selfish or pecuniary views, will long continue therein: not only because he can gain nothing thereby, but because he would quickly be a loser: inasmuch as he must commence subscriber as soon as he is a member. Indeed, the vulgar cry is, "These are all Whitefieldites." But it is a grand mistake. About twenty of the constantly subscribing members, are all that are in connexion with Mr. Whitefield. About fifty are in connexion with Mr. Wesley. About twenty who are of the Established Church, have no connexion with either: and about seventy are Dissenters, who make, in all, a hundred and sixty. There are indeed many more, who assist in the work by occasional subscriptions.

II. 1. These are the *steps* which have been hitherto taken in prosecution of this design. I am, in the second place, to show, the *excellency* thereof, notwithstanding the objections which have been raised against it. Now this may appear from several considerations. And first, from hence, That the making an open stand, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, which overspread our land as a flood, is one of the noblest ways of confessing Christ in the face of his enemies. It is giving glory to God, and showing mankind, that even in these dregs of time,

> —"There are, who faith prefer,
> Though few, and piety to God."

And what more excellent, than to render to God the honour due unto his name? To declare, by a stronger proof than words, even by suffering, and running all hazards, "Verily there is a reward for the righteous; doubtless, there is a God that judgeth the earth?"

2. How excellent is the design, to prevent, in any degree, the dishonour done to his glorious Name, the contempt which is poured on his authority, and the scandal brought upon our holy religion, by the gross, flagrant wickedness of those who are still called by the name of Christ? To stem, in any degree, the torrent of vice, to repress the floods of ungodliness, to remove, in any measure, those occasions of blaspheming the worthy name whereby we are called, is one of the noblest designs that can possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive.

3. And as this design thus evidently tends to bring "glory to God

in the highest," so it no less manifestly conduces to the establishing "peace upon earth." For as all sin directly tends, both to destroy our peace with God, by setting him at open defiance, to banish peace from our own breasts, and to set every man's sword against his neighbour: so whatever prevents or removes sin, does, in the same degree, promote peace, both peace in our own souls, peace with God, and with one another. Such are the genuine fruits of this design, even in the present world. But why should we confine our views to the narrow bounds of time and space? Rather pass over these into eternity. And what fruit of it shall we find there? Let the Apostle speak: "Brethren, if one of you err from the truth, and one convert him," (not to this or that opinion, but to God,) "let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins." Jam. v. 19, 20.

4. Nor is it to individuals only, whether those who betray others into sin, or those that are liable to be betrayed and destroyed by them, that the benefit of this design redounds, but to the whole community whereof we are members. For is it not a sure observation, "righteousness exalteth a nation?" And is it not as sure on the other hand, that *sin is a reproach* to any *people?* yea, and bringeth down the curse of God upon them? So far, therefore, as righteousness, in any branch, is promoted, so far is the national interest advanced. So far as sin, especially open sin, is restrained, the curse and reproach are removed from us. Whoever, therefore, they are that labour herein, they are general benefactors. They are the truest friends of their king and country. And in the same proportion as their design takes place, there can be no doubt, but God will give national prosperity in accomplishment of his faithful word, "Them that honour me, I will honour."

5. But it is objected, "However excellent a design this is, it does not concern *you*. For are there not persons, to whom the repressing these offences, and punishing the offenders, properly belong? Are there not constables and other parish officers, who are bound by oath to this very thing?" There are. Constables and church-wardens, in particular, are engaged, by solemn oaths, to give due information against profaners of the Lord's-day, and all other scandalous sinners. But, if they leave it undone, if, notwithstanding their oaths, they trouble not themselves about the matter, it concerns all that fear God, that love mankind, and that wish well to their king and country, to pursue this design with the very same vigour, as if there were no such officers existing. It being just the same thing, if they are of no use, as if they had no being.

6. "But this is only a pretence: their real design is to get money by giving information." So it has frequently and roundly been affirmed; but without the least shadow of truth. The contrary may be proved by a thousand instances: no member of the society takes any part of the money which is by the law allotted to the informer. They never did from the beginning: nor does any of them ever receive any thing, to suppress or withdraw their information. This is

another mistake, if not wilful slander, for which there is not the least foundation.

7. "But the design is impracticable. Vice is risen to such a head, that it is impossible to suppress it: especially by such means. For what can a handful of poor people do, in opposition to all the world?" "With men this is impossible, but not with God." And they trust not in themselves, but him. Be then the patrons of vice never so strong, to him they are no more than grasshoppers. And all means are alike to him. It is the same thing with God "to deliver by many or by few." The small number, therefore, of those who are on the Lord's side, is nothing; neither the great number of those that are against him. Still he doth whatever pleaseth him. And "there is no counsel nor strength against the Lord."

8. "But if the end you aim at be really to reform sinners, you choose the wrong means. It is the word of God must effect this, and not human laws. And it is the work of ministers, not of magistrates. Therefore, the applying to these can only produce an outward reformation. It makes no change in the heart."

It is true the word of God is the chief, ordinary mean, whereby he changes both the hearts and lives of sinners: and he does this, chiefly by the ministers of the gospel. But it is likewise true, that the magistrate is *the minister of God:* and that he is designed of God *to be a terror to evil doers*, by executing human laws upon them. If this do not change the heart, yet, to prevent outward sin is one valuable point gained. There is so much the less dishonour done to God; less scandal brought on our holy religion; less curse and reproach upon our nation; less temptation laid in the way of others; yea, and less wrath heaped up by the sinners themselves against the day of wrath.

9. "Nay, rather more: for it makes many of them hypocrites, pretending to be what they are not. Others, by exposing them to shame, and putting them to expense, are made impudent and desperate in wickedness: so that in reality none of them are any better, if they are not worse than they were before."

This is a mistake all over. For, 1. Where are these hypocrites? We know none who have pretended to be what they are not. 2. The exposing obstinate offenders to shame, and putting them to expense, does not make them desperate in offending, but afraid to offend. 3. Some of them, far from being worse, are substantially better, the whole tenor of their lives being changed. Yea, 4. Some are inwardly changed, even "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

10. "But many are not convinced, that buying or selling on the Lord's-day is a sin."

If they are not convinced, they ought to be: it is high time they should. The case is as plain as plain can be. For if an open, wilful breach, both of the law of God, and the law of the land, be not sin, pray what is? And if such a breach of divine and human laws is not to be punished, because a man is not convinced it is a

sin, there is an end of all execution of justice, and all men may live as they list.

11. "But *mild* methods ought to be tried first." They ought. And so they are. A mild admonition is given to every offender, before the law is put in execution against him: nor is any man prosecuted, till he has express notice, that this will be the case, unless he will prevent that prosecution, by removing the cause of it. In every case, the mildest method is used which the nature of the case will bear: nor are severer means ever applied, but when they are absolutely necessary to the end.

12. "Well, but after all this stir about reformation, what real good has been done?" Unspeakable good; and abundantly more than any one could have expected, in so short a time, considering the small number of the instruments, and the difficulties they had to encounter. Much evil has been prevented, and much has been removed. Many sinners have been outwardly reformed; some have been inwardly changed. The honour of him whose name we bear, so openly affronted, has been openly defended. And it is not easy to determine, how many, and how great blessings, even this little stand, made for God and his cause, against his daring enemies, may already have derived upon our whole nation. On the whole, then, after all the objections that can be made, reasonable men may still conclude, a more excellent design could scarce ever enter into the heart of man.

III. 1. But, *what manner of men* ought they to be, who engage in such a design? Some may imagine, any that are willing to assist therein, ought readily to be admitted; and that the greater the number of members, the greater will be their influence. But this is by no means true; matter of fact undeniably proves the contrary. While the former society for the reformation of manners, consisted of chosen members only, though neither many, rich, nor powerful, they broke through all opposition, and were eminently successful in every branch of their undertaking. But when a number of men, less carefully chosen, were received into that society, they grew less and less useful, till, by insensible degrees, they dwindled into nothing.

2. The number, therefore, of the members, is no more to be attended to, than their riches or eminence. This is a work of God. It is undertaken in the name of God, and for his sake. It follows, that men who neither love nor fear God, have no part nor lot in this matter. "Why takest thou my covenant in thy mouth," may God say to any of these, "whereas thou" thyself "hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee?" Whoever, therefore, lives in any known sin, is not fit to engage in reforming sinners. More especially if he be guilty in any instance, or in the least degree, of profaning the name of God, or buying, or selling, or doing any unnecessary work on the Lord's-day, or offending in any other of those instances, which this society is peculiarly designed to reform. No: let none who stands himself in need of this reformation, presume to meddle with such an undertaking. First, let him

"pull the beam out of his own eye." Let him be himself *unblamable* in all things.

3. Not that this will suffice. Every one engaging herein, should be more than a harmless man. He should be a man of *faith:* having, at least, such a degree of that "evidence of things not seen," as to aim, "not at the things that are seen, which are temporal, but at those that are not seen, which are eternal:" such a faith as produces a steady *fear of God*, with a lasting resolution, by his grace, to abstain from all that he has forbidden, and to do all that he has commanded. He will more especially need that particular branch of faith, *confidence in God.* It is this faith which *removes mountains*, which *quenches the violence of fire*, which breaks through all opposition, and enables *one* to stand against and *chase a thousand*, knowing in whom his strength lies, and even when he has "the sentence of death in himself, trusting in him who raiseth the dead."

4. He that has faith and confidence in God, will of consequence be a man of *courage.* And such it is highly needful every man should be, who engages in this undertaking. For many things will occur in the prosecution thereof, which are terrible to nature; indeed, so terrible, that all who "confer with flesh and blood," will be afraid to encounter them. Here, therefore, true courage has its proper place, and is necessary in the highest degree. And this, faith only can supply. A believer can say,

> "I fear no denial; no danger I fear:
> Nor start from the trial; for Jesus is near."

5. To *courage*, *patience* is nearly allied: the one regarding future, the other present evils. And whoever joins in carrying on a design of this nature, will have great occasion for this. For, notwithstanding all his unblamableness, he will find himself just in Ishmael's situation, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him." And no wonder. If it be true, that "all who will live godly, shall suffer persecution," how eminently must this be fulfilled in them, who, not content to live godly themselves, compel the ungodly to do so too, or, at least, to refrain from notorious ungodliness? Is not this declaring war against all the world? Setting all the children of the devil at defiance? And will not Satan himself, "*the prince of this world, the ruler of the darkness* thereof," exert all his subtlety and all his force, in support of his tottering kingdom? Who can expect the *roaring lion* will tamely submit to have the prey plucked out of his teeth? "Ye have therefore need of patience, that when ye have done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."

6. And ye have need of *steadiness*, that ye may "hold fast *this* profession of your faith, without wavering." This also should be found in all that unite in this society; which is not a task for a *double-minded man*, for one that is *unstable in his ways.* He that is as a reed shaken with the wind, is not fit for this warfare, which

demands a firm purpose of soul, a constant, determined resolution. One that is wanting in this, may "set his hand to the plough:" but how soon will he "look back?" He may, indeed, "endure for a time. But when persecution or tribulation," public or private troubles, "arise because of the" work, "immediately he is offended."

7. Indeed, it is hard for any to persevere in so unpleasing a work, unless *love* overpower both pain and fear. And, therefore, it is highly expedient, that all engaged therein should have "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts;" that they should all be able to declare, "we love him, because he first loved us." The presence of him, whom their soul so loveth, will then make their labour light. They can then say, not from the wildness of a heated imagination, but with the utmost truth and soberness,

> "With thee conversing I forget
> All time, and toil, and care:
> Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
> While thou, my God, art here."

8. What adds a still greater sweetness, even to labour and pain, is the Christian "love of our neighbour." When they "love their neighbour," that is, every soul of man "as themselves," as their own souls; when "the love of Christ constrains" them to love one another, "even as he loved us;" when, as he "tasted death for every man," so they are "ready to lay down their lives for their brethren," (including in that number, "every man," every soul for which Christ died:) what prospect of danger will then be able to fright them from their labour of love? What suffering will they not be ready to undergo, to save one soul from everlasting burnings? What continuance of labour, disappointment, pain, will vanquish their fixed resolution? Will they not be

> "'Gainst all repulses steel'd, nor ever tir'd
> With toilsome day, or ill-succeeding night?"

So, love both "hopeth and endureth all things." So, "charity never faileth."

9. Love is necessary for all the members of such a society, on another account likewise; even because "it is not puffed up;" it produces not only courage and patience, but humility. And, O! how needful is this for all who are so employed! What can be of more importance, than that they should be little, and mean, and base, and vile, in their own eyes? For, otherwise, should they think themselves any thing, should they impute any thing to themselves, should they admit any thing of a pharisaic spirit, "trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others:" nothing could more directly tend to overthrow the whole design. For, then, they would not only have all the world, but also God himself to contend with; seeing, he "resisteth the proud, and giveth grace" only "to the

humble." Deeply conscious, therefore, should every member of this society be, of his own foolishness, weakness, helplessness: continually hanging, with his whole soul, upon Him, who alone hath wisdom and strength, with an unspeakable conviction, that "the help which is done upon earth, GOD doth it himself;" and that it is he alone who "worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure."

10. One point more. Whoever engages in this design, should have one thing deeply impressed on his heart, viz. that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Let him, therefore, *learn of* him who was *meek*, as well as *lowly*. And let him abide in meekness, as well as humility: "with all lowliness and meekness," let him "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called." Let him be "gentle toward all men," good or bad, for his own sake, for their sake, for Christ's sake. Are any "ignorant, or out of the way?" Let him *have compassion* upon them. Do they even *oppose* the word and the work of God, yea, set themselves in battle array against it? So much the more hath he need, "in meekness to instruct those who thus oppose themselves," if haply they may "awake out of the snare of the devil," and no more be "taken captive at his will."

IV. 1. From the *qualifications* of those who are proper to engage in such an undertaking as this, I proceed to show, Fourthly, With what *spirit*, and in what *manner*, it ought to be pursued. First, with what spirit. Now this first regards the *motive*, which is to be preserved in every step that is taken; for, *if* at any time "the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! But if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." This is, therefore, continually to be remembered, and carried into every word and action. Nothing is to be spoken or done, either great or small, with a view to any temporal advantage: nothing with a view to the favour or esteem, the love or the praise, of men. But the intention, the eye of the mind, is always to be fixed on the glory of God, and good of man.

2. But the spirit with which every thing is to be done, regards the *temper*, as well as the motive. And this is no other than that which has been described above. For the same courage, patience, steadiness, which qualify a man for the work, are to be exercised therein. *Above all*, let him *take the shield of faith:* this will quench a thousand fiery darts. Let him exert all the faith which God hath given him, in every trying hour. And let *all* his *doings be done in love:* never let this be wrested from him. Neither must *many* waters quench this love, nor the floods of ingratitude drown it. *Let*, likewise, that lowly *mind* be in him, which was also in Christ Jesus. Yea, and let him *be clothed with humility*, filling his heart, and adorning his whole behaviour. At the same time, let him "put on bowels of mercies, gentleness, long-suffering:" avoiding the least appearance of malice, bitterness, anger, or resentment; knowing it is our calling, not to be "overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good." In order

to preserve this humble, gentle love, it is needful to do all things with *recollection* of spirit, *watching* against all *hurry*, or dissipation of thought, as well as against pride, wrath, or surliness. But this can be no otherwise preserved than by "continuing instant in prayer," both before and after he comes into the field, and during the whole action; and by doing all in the "spirit of sacrifice," offering all to God, through the Son of his love.

3. As to the outward *manner* of acting, a general rule is, Let it be expressive of these inward tempers. But to be more particular: 1. Let every man beware, not to "do evil that good may come." Therefore, "putting away all lying, let every man speak the truth to his neighbour." Use no fraud or guile, either in order to detect or to punish any man, but "by simplicity and godly sincerity commend yourself to men's consciences in the sight of God." It is probable that, by your adhering to these rules, fewer offenders will be convicted. But so much the more will the blessing of God accompany the whole undertaking.

4. But let innocence be joined with *prudence*, properly so called. Not that offspring of hell, which *the world calls* prudence, which is mere craft, cunning, dissimulation: but with that *wisdom from above*, which our Lord peculiarly recommends to all, who would promote his kingdom upon earth. "Be ye, therefore, wise as serpents, while ye are harmless as doves." This wisdom will instruct you, how to suit your words and whole behaviour, to the persons with whom you have to do, at the time, place, and all other circumstances. It will teach you to cut off occasions of offence, even from those who seek occasion, and to do things of the most offensive nature, in the least offensive manner that is possible.

5. Your *manner of speaking*, particularly to offenders, should be at all times deeply *serious*, (lest it appear like insulting or triumphing over them,) rather inclining to *sad:* showing that you pity them for what they do, and sympathize with them in what they suffer. Let your *air* and *tone* of voice, as well as words, be *dispassionate, calm, mild:* yea, where it would not appear like dissimulation, even *kind* and *friendly*. In some cases, where it will probably be received as it is meant, you may *profess* the *good-will* you bear them: but, at the same time, (that it may not be thought to proceed from fear, or any wrong inclination,) professing your *intrepidity*, and inflexible *resolution*, to oppose and punish vice to the uttermost.

V. 1. It remains only to make some application of what has been said, partly to you who are already engaged in this work, partly to all that fear God, and more especially to them that love as well as fear him.

With regard to *you*, who are already engaged in this work, the first advice I would give you is, calmly and deeply to consider the nature of your undertaking. Know what you are about; be thoroughly acquainted with what you have in hand. Consider the objections which are made to the whole of your undertaking; and, before you

proceed, be satisfied that those objections have no real weight. Then may every man act as he is fully persuaded in his own mind.

2. I advise you, secondly, be not in haste to increase your number. And, in adding thereto, regard not wealth, rank, or any outward circumstances. Only regard the qualifications above described. Inquire diligently, whether the person proposed be of an *unblamable* carriage, and whether he be a man of *faith, courage, patience, steadiness!* Whether he be a *lover* of God and man? If so, he will add to your strength as well as number; if not, you will lose by him more than you gain, for you will displease God. And be not afraid to purge out from among you, any who do not answer the preceding character. By thus lessening your number, you will increase your strength: "you will be vessels meet for your Master's use."

3. I would, thirdly, advise you, narrowly to observe from what *motive* you at any time act or speak. Beware that your intention be not stained with any regard, either to profit or praise. Whatever you do, "do it to the Lord," as the servants of Christ. Do not aim at pleasing yourself in any point, but pleasing him whose you are, and whom you serve. Let your eye be single, from first to last: eye God alone in every word and work.

4. I advise you, in the fourth place, see that you do every thing in a right *temper:* with lowliness and meekness, with patience and gentleness, worthy the gospel of Christ. Take every step, trusting in God, and in the most tender loving spirit you are able. Meantime, *watch always*, against all hurry and dissipation of spirit, and *pray always*, with all earnestness and perseverance, that your faith fail not. And let nothing interrupt that *spirit of sacrifice*, which you make of all you have and are, of all you suffer and do, that it may be an offering of a sweet smelling savour to God, through Jesus Christ.

5. As to the *manner* of acting and speaking, I advise you to do it with all innocence and simplicity, prudence, and seriousness. Add to these, all possible calmness and mildness; nay, all the tenderness which the case will bear. You are not to behave as butchers or hangmen, but as surgeons rather, who put the patient to no more pain than is necessary in order to the cure. For this purpose, each of *you*, likewise, has need of "a lady's hand with a lion's heart." So shall many, even of them you are constrained to punish, "glorify God in the day of visitation."

6. I exhort all of you who fear God, as ever you hope to find mercy at his hands, as you dread being found, (though you knew it not,) "even to fight against God." Do not, on any account, reason, or pretence whatsoever, either directly or indirectly, oppose or hinder so merciful a design, and one so conducive to his glory. But this is not all: If you are lovers of mankind, if you long to lessen the sins and miseries of your fellow-creatures; can you satisfy yourselves, can you be clear before God, by barely not opposing it? Are not *you*, also, bound by the most sacred ties, "as you have opportunity to do good to all men?" And is not here an opportunity of doing

good to many, even good of the highest kind? In the name of God, then, embrace the opportunity. Assist in doing this good, if no otherwise, yet by your earnest prayers for them who are immediately employed therein. Assist them, according to your ability, to defray the expense which necessarily attends it, and which, without the assistance of charitable persons, would be a burden they could not bear. Assist them, if you can without inconvenience, by quarterly or yearly subscriptions. At least, assist them *now:* use the present hour, doing what God puts into your heart. Let it not be said, that you saw your brethren labouring for God, and would not help them with one of your fingers. In this way, however, "come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty!"

7. I have a higher demand upon *you* who love, as well as fear God. He whom you fear, whom you love, has qualified *you* for promoting his work in a more excellent way. Because you love God, you love your brother also: you love, not only your friends, but your enemies; not only the friends, but even the enemies of God. You have "put on, as the elect of God, lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering." You have faith in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he hath sent: faith which overcometh the world. And hereby you conquer both evil shame, and that fear of man which *bringeth a snare:* so that you can "stand with boldness before them that despise you, and make no account of your labours." Qualified then as you are, and armed for the fight, will you be like the children of Ephraim, "who, being harnessed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle?" Will *you* leave a few of your brethren to stand alone, against all the hosts of the aliens? O! say not, "this is too heavy a cross: I have not strength or courage to bear it." True; not of yourself: but you that believe "can do all things, through Christ strengthening you." "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." No cross is too heavy for *him* to bear, knowing they that "suffer with him, shall reign with him." Say not, "Nay, but I cannot bear to be *singular.*" Then you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. No one enters there but through the *narrow way.* And all that walk in this, are singular. Say not, "But I cannot endure the reproach, the odious name of an *Informer.*" And did any man ever save his soul, that was not *a by-word and a proverb of reproach?* Neither canst thou ever save thine, unless thou art willing, that men should "say all manner of evil of thee." Say not, "But if I am active in this work, I shall lose, not only my reputation, but my friends, my customers, my business, my livelihood, so that I shall be brought to poverty." Thou shalt not: thou canst not: it is absolutely impossible, unless God himself choose it. For his "kingdom ruleth over all, and the very hairs of thy head are all numbered." But if the wise, the gracious God, choose it for thee, wilt thou murmur or complain? Wilt thou not rather say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" If you "suffer for Christ, happy are you: the Spirit of glory and of Christ shall rest upon you." Say not, "*I* would suffer

all things, but my wife will not consent to it. And, certainly, a man ought to *leave father, and mother*, and all, *and cleave to his wife*." True, all—but God; all—but Christ. But he ought not to leave *Him* for his wife. He is not to *leave any duty undone*, for the dearest relative. Our Lord himself hath said in this very sense, "If any man loveth father, or mother, or wife, or children, more than me, he is not worthy of me!" Say not, "Well, I would forsake all for Christ: but one duty must not hinder another; and this would frequently hinder my attending public worship." Sometimes it probably would. "Go, then, and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." And, whatever is lost by showing this mercy, God will repay seven-fold into thy bosom. Say not, "But I shall hurt my own soul. I am a young man; and by taking up loose women I should expose myself to temptation." Yes, if you did this in your own strength, or for your own pleasure. But that is not the case. You trust in God; and you aim at pleasing him only. And if he should call you even into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, "though thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "True; if *he called me* into the furnace: but I do not see that I am called to this." Perhaps thou art not willing to see it. However, if thou wast not called before, I call thee *now*, in the name of Christ: take up thy cross, and follow him. Reason no more with flesh and blood, but now resolve to cast in thy lot, with the most despised, the most infamous, of his followers, the filth and off-scouring of the world. I call thee in particular, who didst once strengthen their hands, but since art drawn back. Take courage! Be strong! Fulfil their joy, by returning with heart and hand. Let it appear, thou "departedst for a season, that they might receive thee again for ever." O! "be not disobedient to the heavenly calling!" And, as for all of you, who know whereunto ye are called, count ye all things loss, so ye may save one soul, for which Christ died. And therein "take no thought for the morrow," but "cast all your care on Him that careth for you." *Commit* your souls, bodies, substance, all, to Him, "as unto a merciful and faithful Creator."

The Form of a Donation by Will.

Item. I, *A. B.*, do hereby give and bequeath the sum of *L.*—— unto the Treasurer, for the time being, of a voluntary society, commonly called, or known by the name of *The Society for the Reformation of Manners*, (which Society doth usually meet in St. Martin's le Grand, near Newgate-street, London,) the same to be paid within —— months after my decease, and to be applied to the uses and purposes of the said Society.

SERMON XLVI.

THE GOOD STEWARD.

"*Give an Account of thy Stewardship: for thou canst be no longer Steward.*" LUKE xvi. 2.

1. THE relation which man bears to God, the creature to his Creator, is exhibited to us in the Oracles of God under various representations. Considered as a sinner, a fallen creature, he is there represented as a *debtor* to his Creator. He is also frequently represented as a *servant*, which indeed is essential to him as a creature: insomuch that this appellation is given to the Son of God when in his state of humiliation: he "took upon him the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men."

2. But no character more exactly agrees with the present state of man than that of a *Steward*. Our blessed Lord frequently represents him as such; and there is a peculiar propriety in the representation. It is only in one particular respect, namely as he is a sinner, that he is styled a *debtor*. And when he is styled a *servant*, the appellation is general and indeterminate. But a *steward* is a servant of a particular kind: such a one as man is in all respects. This appellation is exactly expressive of his situation in the present world; specifying what kind of servant he is to God, and what kind of service his divine Master expects from him.

It may be of use, then, to consider this point thoroughly, and to make our full improvement of it. In order to this, let us, First, inquire, in what respects we are now God's *Stewards*. Let us, Secondly, observe, that when he requires our souls of us, we *can be no longer stewards*. It will then only remain, as we may, in the Third place, observe, to "give an account of our stewardship."

I. 1. And, First, we are to inquire, in what respects we are now God's *stewards*. We are now indebted to him for all we have; but although a debtor is obliged to return what he has received, yet until the time of payment comes, he is at liberty to use it as he pleases. It is not so with a steward: he is not at liberty to use what is lodged in his hands, as *he* pleases, but as his Master pleases. He has no right to dispose of any thing which is in his hand, but according to the will of his Lord. For he is not the proprietor of any of these things, but barely intrusted with them by another: and intrusted on this express condition, that he shall dispose of all as his Master orders. Now this is exactly the case of every man, with relation to God. We are not at liberty to use what he has lodged in our hands, as *we* please, but as he pleases, who alone is the possessor of heaven and

earth, and the Lord of every creature. We have no right to dispose of any thing we have, but according to his will, seeing we are not proprietors of any of these things; they are all, as our Lord speaks, *αλλοτρια, belonging to another person;* nor is any thing properly *our own*, in the land of our pilgrimage. We shall not receive *τα ιδια, our own things*, till we come to our own country. Eternal things only are our own: with all these temporal things we are barely intrusted by another; the Disposer and the Lord of all. And he intrusts us with them on this express condition, that we use them only as our Master's goods, and according to the particular directions which he has given us in his word.

2. On this condition he hath intrusted us with our souls, our bodies, our goods, and whatever other talents we have received: but in order to impress this weighty truth on our hearts, it will be needful to come to particulars.

And, First, God has intrusted us with our *soul*, an immortal spirit, made in the image of God, together with all the powers and faculties thereof, understanding, imagination, memory, will; and a train of affections, either included in it, or closely dependent upon it; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, respecting present good and evil; desire and aversion, hope and fear, respecting that which is to come. All these St. Paul seems to include in two words, when he says "the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Perhaps indeed the latter word, *νοηματα*, might rather be rendered *thoughts:* provided we take that word in its most extensive sense, for every perception of the mind, whether active or passive.

3. Now, of all these, it is certain, we are only stewards. God has intrusted us with these powers and faculties, not that we may employ them according to our own wills, but according to the express orders which he has given us: (although it is true, that in doing his will, we most effectually secure our own happiness, seeing it is hereby only that we can be happy, either in time, or in eternity.) Thus, we are to use our understanding, our imagination, our memory, wholly to the glory of him that gave them. Thus our will is to be wholly given up to him, and all our affections to be regulated as he directs. We are to love and hate, to rejoice and grieve, to desire and shun, to hope and fear, according to the rule which he prescribes, whose we are, and whom we are to serve in all things. Even our thoughts are not our own in this sense; they are not at our own disposal: but for every deliberate motion of our minds, we are accountable to our Master.

4. God has, Secondly, intrusted us with our *bodies*, (those exquisitely wrought machines, so "fearfully and wonderfully made,") with all the powers and members thereof. He has intrusted us with the organs of *sense*, of sight, hearing, and the rest: but none of these are given us as our own, to be employed according to our own will. None of these are *lent* us in such a sense, as to leave us at liberty to use them as we please for a season. No: we have received them on

these very terms, that as long as they abide with us, we should employ them all, in that very manner, and no other, which he appoints.

5. It is on the same terms, that he has imparted to us that most excellent talent of *speech*. "Thou hast given me a tongue," says the ancient writer, "that I may praise thee therewith." For this purpose was it given to all the children of men, to be employed in glorifying God. Nothing, therefore, is more ungrateful, or more absurd, than to think or say, *our tongues are our own*. That cannot be, unless we have created ourselves, and so are independent on the Most High. Nay, but "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves:" the manifest consequence is, That he is still *Lord over us*, in this as in all other respects. It follows, that there is not a word of our tongue, for which we are not accountable to him.

6. To him we are equally accountable for the use of our *hands* and *feet*, and all the *members* of our body. These are so many talents which are committed to our trust, until the time appointed by the Father. Until then, we have the use of all these; but as stewards, not as proprietors: to the end, we should "render them, not as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but as instruments of righteousness unto God."

7. God has intrusted us, Thirdly, with a portion of *worldly goods*, with food to eat, raiment to put on, and a place where to lay our head; with, not only the necessaries, but the conveniences of life. Above all, he has committed to our charge that precious talent, which contains all the rest, *money;* indeed it is unspeakably precious, if we are *wise and faithful stewards* of it; if we employ every part of it for such purposes as our blessed Lord has commanded us to do.

8. God has intrusted us, Fourthly, with several talents, which do not properly come under any of these heads: such is bodily *strength:* such are *health*, a pleasing *person*, an agreeable *address:* such are *learning* and *knowledge* in their various degrees, with all the other advantages of *education*. Such is the *influence* which we have over others, whether by their *love* and *esteem* of us, or by *power:* power to do them good or hurt, to help or hinder them in the circumstances of life. Add to these, that invaluable talent of *time*, with which God intrusts us from moment to moment. And, lastly, that on which all the rest depend, and without which they would all be curses, not blessings: namely, the *grace* of God, the power of his Holy Spirit, which alone worketh in us all that is acceptable in his sight.

II. 1. In so many respects are the children of men, stewards of the Lord, *the possessor of heaven and earth*. So large a portion of his goods, of various kinds, hath he committed to their charge. But it is not for ever, nor indeed for any considerable time. We have this trust reposed in us, only during the short, uncertain space that we sojourn here below: only so long as we remain on earth, as this fleeting breath is in our nostrils. The hour is swiftly approaching, it is just at hand, when we *can be no longer stewards*. The moment the body "returns to the dust as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it," we bear that character no more; the time of our stewardship is

at an end. Part of those goods wherewith we were before intrusted, are now come to an end: at least, they are so with regard to *us;* nor are we any longer intrusted with them: and that part which remains, can no longer be employed or improved as it was before.

2. Part of what we were intrusted with before, is at an end, at least, with regard to us. What have we to do, after this life, with food, and raiment, and houses, and earthly possessions? The food of the dead is the dust of the earth: they are clothed only with worms and rottenness. They dwell in "the house prepared for all flesh:" their lands know them no more. All their worldly goods are delivered into other hands, and they have "no more portion under the sun."

3. The case is the same with regard to the *body.* The moment the spirit returns to God, we are no longer stewards of this machine, which is then sown in corruption and dishonour. All the parts and members of which it was composed, lie mouldering in the clay. The hands have no longer power to move; the feet have forgot their office; the flesh, the sinews, the bones, are all hastening to be dissolved into common dust.

4. Here ends also the talents of a *mixed* nature, our *strength*, our *health;* our *beauty*, our *eloquence*, and *address;* our faculty of pleasing, of persuading, or convincing others. Here end likewise all the *honours* we once enjoyed, all the *power* which was lodged in our hands, all the *influence* which we once had over others, either by the love or the esteem which they bore us. "Our love, our hatred, our desire is perished:" none regard how we were once affected toward them. They look upon the dead as neither able to help nor hurt them; so that "a living dog is better than a dead lion."

5. Perhaps a doubt may remain concerning some of the other talents wherewith we are now intrusted, whether they will cease to exist when the body returns to dust, or only cease to be improvable. Indeed, there is no doubt, but the kind of *speech* which we now use, by means of these bodily organs, will then be entirely at an end, when those organs are destroyed. It is certain, the tongue will no more occasion any vibrations in the air: neither will the ear convey these tremulous motion to the common sensory. Even the *sonus exiles*, the low, shrill voice, which the poet supposes to belong to a separate spirit, we cannot allow to have a real being; it is a mere flight of imagination. Indeed, it cannot be questioned, but separate spirits have some way to communicate their sentiments to each other: but what inhabitant of flesh and blood can explain that way? What we term *speech*, they cannot have. So that we can no longer be stewards of this talent, when we are numbered with the dead.

6. It may likewise admit of a doubt, whether our *senses* will exist, when the organs of sense are destroyed. Is it not probable, that those of the lower kind will cease; the feeling, the smell, the taste, as they have a more immediate reference to the body, and are chiefly, if not wholly intended for the preservation of it? But will not some kind of *sight* remain, although the eye be closed in death? And will

there not be something in the soul, equivalent to the present sense of *hearing?* Nay, is it not probable, that these will not only exist in the separate state, but exist in a far greater degree, in a more eminent manner than now? When the soul, disentangled from its clay, is no longer "a dying spark in a cloudy place:" when it no longer "looks through the windows of the eye and ear?" But rather is all eye, all ear, all sense, in a manner we cannot yet conceive. And have we not a clear proof of the possibility of this, of seeing without the use of the eye, and hearing without the use of the ear? Yea, an earnest of it continually? For does not the soul see, in the clearest manner, when the eye is of no use, namely, in dreams? Does she not then enjoy the faculty of hearing, without any help from the ear? But however this be, certain it is, that neither will our *senses*, any more than our *speech*, be intrusted to us in the manner they are now, when the body lies in the silent grave.

7. How far the *knowledge or learning* which we have gained by *education*, will then remain, we cannot tell. Solomon indeed says, "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." But it is evident, these words cannot be understood in an absolute sense. For it is so far from being true, that there is no *knowledge* after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then? Whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, that

> "All these shadows, which for things we take,
> Are but the empty dreams, which in death's sleep we make?"

Only excepting those things which God himself has been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one: after having sought for truth, with some diligence, for half a century, I am, at this day, hardly sure of any thing, but what I learn from the Bible. Nay, I positively affirm, I *know nothing* else so certainly, that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it.

So much, however, we may learn from Solomon's words, *that there is no* such *knowledge* or *wisdom in the grave*, as will be of any use to an unhappy spirit; there *is no device* there, whereby he can then improve those talents, with which he was once intrusted. For *time* is no more: the time of our trial for everlasting happiness or misery is past. *One day*, the day of man, is over; *the day of salvation is ended.* Nothing now remains but the day of the Lord, ushering in, wide, unchangeable eternity.

8. But still, our souls, being incorruptible and immortal, of a nature "little lower than the angels," (even if we are to understand that phrase of our original nature, which may well admit of a doubt,) when our bodies are mouldered into earth, will remain with all their faculties. Our *memory*, our *understanding* will be so far from being destroyed, yea, or impaired, by the dissolution of the body, that, on the contrary, we have reason to believe, they will be inconceivably strengthened. Have we not the clearest reason to believe, that

they will then be wholly freed from those defects, which now naturally result from the union of the soul with the corruptible body? It is highly probable, that from the time these are disunited, our memory will let nothing slip: yea, that it will faithfully exhibit every thing to our view, which was ever committed to it. It is true, that the invisible world is, in Scripture, termed "the land of forgetfulness;" or, as it is still more strongly expressed in the old translation, "the land where all things are forgotten." They are forgotten; but by whom? Not by the inhabitants of that land, but by the inhabitants of the earth. It is with regard to them that the unseen world is *the land of forgetfulness*. *All things* therein *are* too frequently forgotten by these; but not by disembodied spirits. From the time they have put off the earthly tabernacle, we can hardly think they forget any thing.

9. In like manner, the *understanding* will, doubtless, be freed from the defects that are now inseparable from it. For many ages, it has been an unquestionable maxim, *Humanum est errare et nescire:* ignorance and mistake are inseparable from human nature. But the whole of this assertion is only true, with regard to living men, and holds no longer, than while "the corruptible body presses down the soul." Ignorance, indeed, belongs to every finite understanding, (seeing there is none beside God that knoweth all things;) but not mistake. When the body is laid aside, this also is laid aside for ever.

10. What then can we say to an ingenious man, who has lately made a discovery, that disembodied spirits have not only no *senses*, (not even sight or hearing) but no *memory*, or *understanding*, no *thought*, or perception, not so much as a *consciousness* of their own existence? That they are in a dead sleep from death to the resurrection? *Consanguineus lethi sopor* indeed! Such a sleep we may call a near kinsman of death, if it be not the same thing. What can we say, but that ingenious men have strange dreams: and these they sometimes mistake for realities!

11. But to return: As the soul will retain its understanding and memory, notwithstanding the dissolution of the body, so undoubtedly the *will*, including all the *affections*, will remain in its full vigour. If our love or anger, our hope or desire perish, it is only with regard to those whom we leave behind. To whom it matters not, whether they were the objects of our love or hate, of our desire or aversion. But in separate spirits themselves, we have no reason to believe, that any of these are extinguished. It is more probable, that they work with far greater force, than while the soul was clogged with flesh and blood.

12. But although all these, although both our knowledge and senses, our memory and understanding, together with our will, our love, hate, and all our affections, remain after the body is dropt off, yet, in this respect, they are as though they were not; we are no longer stewards of them. The things continue, but our stewardship does not: we no more act in that capacity. Even the *grace* which

was formerly intrusted with us, in order to enable us to be faithful and wise stewards, is now no longer intrusted for that purpose. The days of our stewardship are ended.

III. 1. It now remains, that being *no longer stewards*, we *give an account of our stewardship.* Some have imagined, this is to be done immediately after death, as soon as we enter into the world of spirits. Nay, the church of Rome does absolutely assert this: yea, make it an article of faith. And thus much we may allow, the moment a soul drops the body, and stands naked before God, it cannot but know, what its portion will be to all eternity. It will have full in its view, either everlasting joy, or everlasting torment: as it is no longer possible to be deceived, in the judgment which we pass upon ourselves. But the Scripture gives us no reason to believe, that God will then sit in judgment upon us. There is no passage in all the Oracles of God, which affirms any such thing. That which has been frequently alleged for this purpose, seems rather to prove the contrary: namely, (Heb. ix. 27,) "It is appointed for men once to die, and after this, the judgment." For in all reason the word *once* is here applied, to judgment as well as death. So that the fair inference to be drawn from this very text, is, not that there are two judgments, a particular and a general; but that we are to be judged as well as to die, once only: not once immediately after death, and again after the general resurrection; but then only "when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him." The imagination therefore of one judgment at death, and another at the end of the world, can have no place with those, who make the written word of God, the whole and sole standard of their faith.

2. The time then when we are to give this account, is, when the "great white throne comes down from heaven, and he that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens, and the earth, flee away, and there is found no place for them." It is then "the dead, small and great, will stand before God: and the books will be opened;" the book of Scripture, to them who were intrusted therewith, the book of conscience to all mankind. The *book of remembrance*, likewise, (to use another scriptural expression,) which has been written from the foundation of the world, will then be laid open to the view of all the children of men. Before all these, even the whole human race, before the devil and his angels, before an innumerable company of holy angels, and before God the Judge of all: thou wilt appear, without any shelter or covering, without any possibility of disguise, to give a particular account of the manner wherein thou hast employed all thy Lord's goods.

3. The Judge of all will then inquire, "How didst thou employ thy *soul?* I intrusted thee with an immortal spirit, endowed with various powers and faculties, with understanding, imagination, memory, will, affections. I gave thee withal full and express directions, how all these were to be employed. Didst thou employ thy understanding, as far as it was capable, according to those directions,

namely, in the knowledge of thyself and me? My nature, my attributes? My works, whether of creation, of providence, or of grace? In acquainting thyself with my word? In using every mean to increase thy knowledge thereof? In meditating thereon day and night? Didst thou employ thy *memory* according to my will? In treasuring up whatever knowledge thou hadst acquired, which might conduce to my glory, to thy own salvation, or the advantage of others? Didst thou store up therein, not things of no value, but whatever instruction thou hadst learned from my word: and whatever experience thou hadst gained, of my wisdom, truth, power, and mercy? Was thy *imagination* employed, not in painting vain images, much less such as nourished *foolish and hurtful desires*, but in representing to thee whatever would profit thy soul, and awaken thy pursuit of wisdom and holiness? Didst thou follow my directions with regard to thy *will?* Was it wholly given up to me? Was it swallowed up in mine, so as never to oppose, but always run parallel with it? Were thy *affections* placed and regulated in such a manner, as I appointed in my word? Didst thou give me thy heart? Didst thou not love the world, neither the things of the world? Was I the object of thy love? Was all thy desire unto me, and unto the remembrance of my name? Was I the joy of thy heart, the delight of thy soul, the chief among ten thousand? Didst thou sorrow for nothing, but what grieved my Spirit? Didst thou fear and hate nothing but sin? Did the whole stream of thy affections flow back to the ocean from whence they came? Were thy *thoughts* employed according to my will? Not in ranging to the ends of the earth, not on folly, or sin; but on *whatsoever things were pure*, *whatsoever things were holy*, or, whatsoever was conducive to my *glory*, and to *peace and good-will among men?*"

4. Thy Lord will then inquire, "How didst thou employ the *body* wherewith I intrusted thee? I gave thee a *tongue*, to praise me therewith: Didst thou use it to the end for which it was given? Didst thou employ it, not in evil-speaking or idle-speaking, not in uncharitable or unprofitable conversation: but in such as was good, as was necessary or useful to thyself or others? Such as always tended, directly or indirectly, to *minister grace to the hearers?* I gave thee, together with thy other *senses*, those grand avenues of *sight and hearing:* were these employed to those excellent purposes for which they were bestowed upon thee? In bringing thee in more and more instruction in righteousness and true holiness? I gave thee hands and feet, and various *members*, wherewith to perform the works which were prepared for thee: were they employed, not in doing *the will of the flesh*, of thy evil nature, or *the will of the mind*, (the things to which thy reason or fancy led thee,) but *the will of him that sent* thee into the world, merely to work out thy own salvation? Didst thou present all thy members, not to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness, but to me alone, through the Son of my love, *as instruments of righteousness?*

5. The Lord of all will next inquire, "How didst thou employ the

worldly goods which I lodged in thy hands? Didst thou use thy food, not so as to seek or place thy happiness therein, but so as to preserve the body in health, in strength, and vigour, a fit instrument for the soul? Didst thou use apparel, not to nourish pride or vanity, much less to tempt others to sin, but conveniently and decently to defend thyself from the injuries of the weather? Didst thou prepare and use thy house and all other conveniences, with a single eye to my glory? In every point seeking not thy own honour, but mine: studying not to please thyself, but me? Once more: in what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, *money?* Not in gratifying the desire of flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life? Not squandering it away in vain expenses, the same as throwing it into the sea? Not hoarding it up to leave behind thee, the same as burying it in the earth? But first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family: then restoring the remainder to me, through the poor, whom I had appointed to receive it: looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose: leaving thee the right of being supplied first, and the blessedness of giving rather than receiving? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted according to their various necessities? Wast thou eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame? A father to the fatherless, and an husband to the widow? And didst thou labour to improve all outward works of mercy, as a mean of saving souls from death?"

6. Thy Lord will farther inquire, "Hast thou been a wise and faithful steward, with regard to the talents of a mixed nature which I lent thee? Didst thou employ thy *health* and *strength*, not in folly or sin, not in the pleasures which perished in the using, 'not in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the desires thereof,' but in a vigorous pursuit of that better part which none could take away from thee? Didst thou employ whatever was pleasing in thy *person* or *address*, whatever advantages thou hadst by *education*, whatever share of *learning*, whatever *knowledge*, of things or men were committed to thee, for the promoting of virtue in the world, for the enlargement of my kingdom? Didst thou employ whatever share of *power* thou hadst, whether *influence* over others, by the love or esteem of thee which they had conceived, for the increase of their wisdom and holiness? Didst thou employ that inestimable talent of *time*, with wariness and circumspection, as duly weighing the value of every moment, and knowing that all were numbered in eternity? Above all, wast thou a good steward of my *grace*, preventing, accompanying, and following thee? Didst thou duly observe, and carefully improve, all the influences of my Spirit? Every good desire? Every measure of light? All his sharp words and gentle reproofs? How didst thou profit by "the spirit of bondage and fear," which was previous to "the Spirit of adoption?" And when thou wast made a partaker of his Spirit, crying in thy heart, "Abba, Father," didst thou stand fast in the glorious liberty wherewith I made thee free? Didst thou from

thenceforth present thy soul and body, all thy thoughts, thy words, and actions, in one flame of love, as an holy sacrifice, glorifying me with thy body and thy spirit? Then "well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" And what will remain, either to the faithful or unfaithful steward? Nothing but the execution of that sentence, which has been passed by the righteous Judge: fixing thee in a state which admits of no change, through everlasting ages. It remains only, that thou be rewarded to all eternity, according to thy works.

IV. 1. From these plain considerations we may learn, First, how important is this short, uncertain day of life! How precious above all utterance, above all conception, is every portion of it!

> "The least of these a serious care demands:
> For though they are little, they are golden sands!"

How deeply does it concern every child of man, to let none of these run to waste; but improve them all to the noblest purposes, as long as the breath of God is in his nostrils!

2. We learn from hence, Secondly, that there is no employment of our time, no action or conversation that is purely *indifferent*. All is good or bad, because all our time, as every thing we have, is *not our own*. All these are, as our Lord speaks, τα αλλοτρια, the property of another; of God our Creator. Now these either are, or are not employed according to his will. If they are so employed, all is good; if they are not, all is evil. Again: It is his will, that we should continually grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently, every thought, word, and work, whereby we grow in grace, is good: and every one whereby this knowledge is not increased, is truly and properly evil.

3. We learn from hence, Thirdly, that there are no works of supererogation; that we can never do more than our duty: seeing all we have is not our own, but God's; all we can do is due to him. We have not received this or that, or many things only, but every thing from him: therefore, every thing is his due. He that gives all, must needs have a right to all: So that if we pay him any thing less than all, we cannot be *faithful stewards*. And considering, *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own* labour, we cannot be *wise stewards*, unless we labour to the uttermost of our power: not leaving any thing undone, which we possibly can do, by putting forth all our strength.

4. Brethren, "Who is an understanding man and endued with knowledge among you?" Let him show the wisdom from above, by walking suitably to his character. If he so account of himself, as a steward of the manifold gifts of God, let him see that all his thoughts, words, and works, be agreeable to the post God has assigned him. It is no small thing, to lay out for God all which you have received from God. It requires all your wisdom, all your resolution, all your patience, and constancy: far more than ever you had by nature; but not more than you may have by grace. For his grace is suffi-

cient for you; and "all things," you know, "are possible to him that believeth." By faith, then, "put on the Lord Jesus Christ:" "put on the whole armour of God," and you shall be enabled to glorify Him in all your words and works; yea, to bring every thought in to captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Edinburgh,
May 15, 1768.

SERMON XLVII.

ON THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

"*Do I not fill Heaven and Earth? saith the Lord.*"—JER. xxiii. 24.

1. HOW strongly and beautifully do these words express the omnipresence of God! And can there be, in the whole compass of nature, a more sublime subject? Can there be any, more worthy the consideration of every rational creature? Is there any more necessary to be considered, and to be understood,—so far as our poor faculties will admit? How many excellent purposes may it answer? What deep instruction may it convey to all the children of men? And more directly, to the children of God?

2. How is it then, that so little has been written on so sublime and useful a subject? It is true, that some of our most eminent writers have, occasionally, touched upon it, and have several strong and beautiful reflections, which were naturally suggested by it. But which of them has published a regular treatise, or so much as a sermon upon the head? Perhaps many were conscious of their inability to do justice to so vast a subject. It is possible, there may some such lie hid, in the voluminous writings of the last century. But if they are hid, even in their own country, if they are buried in oblivion, it is the same, for any use they are of, as if they had never been written.

3. What seems to be wanting still, for general use, is a plain discourse on the omnipresence, or ubiquity of God. First, in some manner explaining and proving that glorious truth, God is in this, and every place: and then applying it to the consciences of all thinking men, in a few practical inferences.

I. 1. Accordingly, I will endeavour, by the assistance of his Spirit, First, a little to explain the omnipresence of God: to show how we are to understand this glorious truth, God is in this, and every place. The Psalmist, you may remember, speaks strongly and beautifully upon it, in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm: ob-

serving, in the most exact order, First, God is in this place, and then, God is in every place. He observes, first, "Thou art about my bed, and about my path, and spiest out all my ways, (ver. 2.) Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;" (ver. 4.) Although the *manner* thereof he could not explain: *how* it was, he could not tell. "Such knowledge," says he, "is too wonderful for me: I cannot attain unto it," (ver. 5.) He next observes, in the most lively and affecting manner, that God is in every place. "Whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also." (ver. 6, 7.) If I could ascend, speaking after the manner of men, to the highest part of the universe, or could I descend to the lowest point, thou art alike present both in one and the other. "If I should take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand would lead me;" thy power and thy presence would be before me, "and thy right hand would hold me," seeing thou art equally in the length and breadth, and in the heighth and depth of the universe. Indeed, thy presence and knowledge not only reach the utmost bounds of creation, but

> "Thine omnipresent sight,
> Even to the pathless realms extends
> Of uncreated night."

In a word, there is no point of space, whether within or without the bounds of creation, where God is not.

2. Indeed, this subject is far too vast to be comprehended by the narrow limits of human understanding. We can only say, the great God, the eternal, the almighty Spirit, is as unbounded in his presence, as in his duration and power. In condescension, indeed, to our weak understanding, he is said, to *dwell in heaven:* but, strictly speaking, the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, but he is in every part of his dominion. The universal God dwelleth in universal space: so that we may say,

> "Hail, FATHER! whose creating call,
> Unnumber'd worlds attend!
> JEHOVAH, comprehending all,
> Whom none can comprehend!"

3. If we may dare attempt the illustrating this a little farther, what is the space occupied by a grain of sand, compared to that space which is occupied by the starry heavens? It is as a cipher: it is nothing: it vanishes away in the comparison. What is it then to the whole expanse of space, to which the whole creation is infinitely less than a grain of sand! And yet this space, to which the whole creation bears no proportion at all, is infinitely less in comparison of the great God, than a grain of sand, yea, a millionth part of it, is to that whole space.

II. 1. This seems to be the plain meaning of those solemn words,

which God speaks of himself, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" And these sufficiently prove his omnipresence; which may be farther proved from this consideration, God acts every where, and, therefore, is every where: for it is an utter impossibility that any being, created or uncreated, should work where it is not. God acts in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, throughout the whole compass of his creation; by sustaining all things, without which every thing would in an instant sink into its primitive nothing: by governing all, every moment superintending every thing that he has made; strongly and sweetly influencing all, and yet without destroying the liberty of his rational creatures. The very Heathens acknowledged, that the great God governs the large and conspicuous parts of the universe; that he regulates the motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sun, moon, and stars; that he is

> ——————Vastem
> Mens agitans molem, et toto se corpore miscens:
> "——————The all-informing Soul,
> That fills, pervades, and actuates the whole."

But they had no conception of his having regard to the least things as well as the greatest: of his presiding over all that he has made, and governing atoms as well as worlds. This we could not have known, unless it had pleased God to reveal it unto us himself. Had he not himself told us so, we should not have dared to think that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground, without the will of our Father which is in heaven:" and much less affirm, that "even the very hairs of our head are all numbered!"

2. This comfortable truth, that "God filleth heaven and earth," we learn also from the Psalmist above recited. "If I climb up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there thy hand shall lead me." The plain meaning is, If I remove to any distance whatever, thou art there, thou still besettest me, and layest thine hand upon me. Let me flee to any conceivable or inconceivable distance, above, beneath, or on any side, it makes no difference; thou art still equally there: in thee I still "live, and move, and have my being."

3. And where no creature is, still God is there. The presence or absence of any or all creatures, makes no difference with regard to him. He is equally in all, or without all. Many have been the disputes among philosophers, whether there be any such thing as empty space in the universe. And it is now generally supposed, that all space is full. Perhaps it cannot be proved, that all space is filled with matter. But the Heathen himself will bear us witness, *Jovis omnia plena*, "All things are full of God." Yea, and whatever space exists beyond the bounds of creation, (for creation must have bounds, seeing nothing is boundless, nothing can be, but the great Creator,) even that space cannot exclude him who fills the heaven and the earth.

1. Just equivalent to this, is the expression of the Apostle, Eph.

ii. 23, (not as some have strangely supposed, concerning the church, but concerning the head of it, "The fulness of him that filleth all in all:" τα παντα εν πασιν, literally translated, *all things in all things;* the strongest expression of universality which can possibly be conceived. It necessarily includes the last and the greatest of all things that exist. So that if any expression could be stronger, it would be stronger than even that, the *filling heaven and earth.*

5. Indeed, this very expression, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (the question being equal to the strongest affirmation,) implies the clearest assertion of God's being present every where, and filling all space. For it is well known the Hebrew phrase, *heaven and earth,* includes the whole universe, the whole extent of space, created or uncreated, and all that is therein.

6. Nay, and we cannot believe the omnipotence of God, unless we believe his omnipresence. For seeing, as we observed before, nothing can act where it is not: if there were any space where God was not present, he would not be able to do any thing there. Therefore, to deny the omnipresence of God, implies, likewise, the denial of his omnipotence. To set bounds to the one is, undoubtedly, to set bounds to the other also.

7. Indeed, wherever we suppose him not to be, there we suppose all his attributes to be in vain. He cannot exercise there, either his justice, or mercy, either his power, or wisdom. In this extra-mundane space, (so to speak,) where we suppose God not to be present, we must, of course, suppose him to have no dominion; but, as it is supposed to be beyond the bounds of the creation, so it is beyond the bounds of the Creator's power. Such is the blasphemous absurdity, which is implied in this supposition.

8. But to all that is or can be said, of the omnipresence of God, the world has one grand objection: they cannot see him. And this is really at the root of all their other objections. This our blessed Lord observed long ago: "Whom the world cannot receive, because they see him not." But is it not easy to reply, "Can you see the wind? You cannot. But do you, therefore, deny its existence, or its presence?" You say, No: for I can perceive it by my other senses. "But, by which of your senses do you perceive your soul? Surely, you do not deny either the existence or the presence of this! And yet it is not the object of your sight, or of any of your other senses. Suffice it then to consider, that God is a Spirit, as is your soul also. Consequently, "him no man hath seen, or can see," with eyes of flesh and blood.

III. 1. But allowing that GOD is here, as in every place, that he is "about our bed, and about our path," that he "besets us behind and before, and lays his hand upon us:" what inference should we draw from hence? What use should we make of this awful consideration? Is it not meet and right, to humble ourselves before the eyes of his Majesty? Should we not labour continually to acknowledge his presence, "with reverence and godly fear?" Not, indeed, with the fear of devils, that believe and tremble, but with the fear of

angels, with something similar to that which is felt by the inhabitants of heaven, when

> "Dark with excessive bright his skirts appear,
> Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest seraphim
> Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes."

2. Secondly, If you believe, that God is about your bed, and about your path, and spieth out all your ways, then take care not to do the least thing, not to speak the least word, not to indulge the least thought, which you have reason to think would offend him. Suppose that a messenger of God, an angel, were now standing at your right hand, and fixing his eyes upon you, would you not take care to abstain from every word or action, that you knew would offend him? Yea, suppose one of your mortal fellow-servants, suppose only a holy man stood by you, would you not be extremely cautious how you conducted yourself, both in word and action? How much more cautious ought you to be, when you know, that not a holy man, not an angel of God, but God himself, the Holy One, "that inhabiteth eternity," is inspecting your heart, your tongue, your hand, every moment? And that he himself will surely bring you into judgment, for all you think, and speak, and act, under the sun!

3. In particular: If there is not a word in your tongue, not a syllable you speak, but he "knoweth it altogether;" how exact should you be in "setting a watch before your mouth, and in keeping the door of your lips!" How wary does it behoove you to be in all your conversation, being forewarned by your Judge, that, "By your words you shall be justified, or by your words you shall be condemned!" How cautious, lest "any corrupt communication," any uncharitable, yea, or unprofitable discourse, should proceed out of your mouth:" instead of "that which is good to the use of edifying, and meet to minister grace to the hearers!"

4. Yea, if God sees our hearts, as well as our hands, and in all places; if he understandeth our thoughts long before they are clothed with words; how earnestly should we urge that petition, "Search me, O Lord, and prove me; try out my reins and my heart: look well if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" How needful is it to work together with him, in "keeping our hearts with all diligence," till he hath "cast down imaginations, evil reasonings, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brought into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

5. On the other hand, if you are already listed under the great Captain of your salvation, seeing you are continually under the eye of your Captain, how zealous and active should you be, to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life! to endure hardships, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," to use all diligence, to *war a good warfare*, and to do whatever is acceptable in his sight! How studious

should you be to approve all your ways to his all-seeing eyes, that he may say to your hearts, what he will proclaim aloud in the great assembly of men and angels, "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

6. In order to attain these glorious ends, spare no pains to preserve always, a deep, a continual, a lively, and a joyful sense of his gracious presence. Never forget his comprehensive word to the great Father of the faithful, "I am the Almighty" (rather, the *All-sufficient*) "God, walk before me, and be thou perfect!" Cheerfully expect, that he, before whom you stand, will ever guide you with his eye, will support you by his guardian hand, will keep you from all evil; and, when you have suffered a while, will make you perfect, will stablish, strengthen, and settle you: and then preserve you unblamable, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Portsmouth, Aug. 12, 1788.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

"*If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the Dead.*"—LUKE xvi. 31.

1. HOW strange a paradox is this! How contrary to the common apprehension of man! Who is so confirmed in unbelief, as not to think, "If one came to me from the dead, I should be effectually persuaded to repent?" But this passage affords us a more strange saying, (ver. 14,) "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "No! Why not? Why cannot we serve both?" Will a true servant of mammon say. Accordingly, the Pharisees, who supposed they served God, and did cordially serve mammon, *derided him:* ἐξεμυκτήριζον; a word expressive of the deepest contempt. But he said, (ver. 15,) "Ye are they who justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: and that which is highly esteemed among men, is [very commonly] an abomination before God:" a terrible proof of which our Lord subjoins in the remaining part of the chapter.

2. But is the subsequent account merely a parable, or a real history? It has been believed by many, and roundly asserted, to be a mere parable: because of one or two circumstances therein, which are not easy to be accounted for. In particular, it is hard to conceive,

how a person in hell could hold conversation with one in paradise. But, admitting we cannot account for this, will it overbalance an express assertion of our Lord, "There was," says our Lord, "a certain rich man."—Was there not? Did such a man never exist? "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus."—Was there, or was there not? Is it not bold enough, positively to deny, what our blessed Lord positively affirms? Therefore, we cannot reasonably doubt, but the whole narration, with all its circumstances, is exactly true. And Theophylact, (one of the ancient commentators on the Scriptures,) observes upon the text, "That, according to the tradition of the Jews, Lazarus lived at Jerusalem."

I propose, with God's assistance, First, to explain this history: Secondly, to apply it: and, Thirdly, to prove the truth of that weighty sentence with which it is concluded; namely, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

I. 1. And, first, I will endeavour, with God's assistance, to explain this history. "There was a certain rich man." And, doubtless, on that very account, highly esteemed among men. "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen:"—And, consequently, esteemed the more highly, both as appearing suitably to his fortune, and as an encourager of trade; "and fared sumptuously every day." Here was another reason for his being *highly esteemed* for hospitality and generosity by those who frequently sat at his table, and the tradesmen that furnished it.

2. "And there was a certain beggar," one in the lowest line of human infamy, "named Lazarus," according to the Greek termination; in Hebrew, Eleazar. From this name we may gather that he was of no mean family, although this branch of it was, at present, so reduced. It is probable, he was well known in the city: and it was no scandal to him to be named.—"Who was laid at his gate," although no pleasing spectacle, so that one might wonder he was suffered to lie there; "full of sores," of running ulcers: "and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. So the complicated affliction, of poverty, pain, and want of bread, lay upon him at once! But it does not appear that any creature took the least notice of the despicable wretch! Only "the dogs came and licked his sores." All the comfort which this world afforded him!

3. But see the change! "The beggar died:"—Here ended poverty and pain; "and was carried by angels:"—nobler servants than any that attended the rich man:—"into Abraham's bosom:" So the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles Paradise: the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest:" the receptacle of holy souls, from death to the resurrection." It is, indeed, very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven: but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God: on the contrary, our Lord says to Mary, after the

resurrection, "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father," in heaven. But he had been in paradise, according to his promise to the penitent thief; "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Hence, it is plain, that paradise is not heaven. It is, indeed, (if we may be allowed the expression,) the anti-chamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain, till, after the general Judgment, they are received into glory.

4. But see, the scene changes again! "The rich man also died:"—What! must rich men also die? Must they fall "like one of the people?" Is there no help? A rich man in London, some years ago, when the physician told him, "He must die," gnashed his teeth, and clenched his fist; and cried out vehemently, "God, God, I won't die!" But he died with the very words in his mouth! "And was buried:"—Doubtless, with pomp enough, suitable to his quality: although we do not find that there was then in all the world, that exquisite instance of human folly, that senseless, cruel mockery of a poor putrefying carcass, what we term *lying in state*.

5. "And, in hell he lifted up his eyes:"—O, what a change! How is the mighty fallen! But the word which is here rendered *hell*, does not always mean, the place of the damned. It is, literally, *the invisible world*, and is of very wide extent, including the receptacle of separate spirits, whether good or bad. But here it evidently means, that region of Hades, where the souls of wicked men reside, as appears from the following words, "being in torments:"—in order, say some, "to atone for the sins committed while in the body, as well as to purify the soul from all its inherent sin." Just so, the eminent heathen poet, near two thousand years ago:

> "Necesse est
> Multa diu concreta modis inolescere miris,
> Ergo exercentur pœnis.———
> Aliæ panduntur inanes
> Suspensæ ad ventos: aliis sub gurgite vasto
> Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni."

See the near resemblance between the ancient and the modern purgatory! Only in the ancient, the heathen purgatory, both fire, water, and air, were employed in the expiating sin, and purifying the soul: whereas, in the mystic purgatory, fire alone is supposed sufficient, both to purge and expiate! Vain hope! No suffering, but that of Christ, has any power to expiate sin: and no fire, but that of love, can purify the soul, either in time or in eternity.

6. "He seeth Abraham afar off."—Far, indeed! As far as from hell to paradise. Perhaps, "ten-fold the length of this terrene." But how could this be? I cannot tell: but it is by no means incredible. For who knows, how "far an angel kens?" Or a spirit, divested of flesh and blood?—"And Lazarus in his bosom." It is well known, that in the ancient feasts, among the Jews as well as the Romans, the guests did not sit down at the table, as is now the custom to do, but lay on couches, each having a pillow at his left side, on which he supported his elbow; and he that sat next him, on the

right side, was said *to lie in his bosom.* It was in this sense that the Apostle John lay in his *Master's bosom.* Accordingly the expression of Lazarus lying in *Abraham's bosom*, implies, that he was in the highest place of honour and happiness.

7. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me."—Thou fool, what can Abraham do? What can any creature, yea, all the creation do, to break the bars of the bottomless pit? Whoever would escape from the place of torment, let him cry to God, the Father of mercy! Nay, but the time is past! Justice now takes place, and rejoices over mercy!—"And send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame!" How exceedingly modest a request is this! He does not say, that he may take me out of this flame. He does not ask, that he may bring me a cup of water, or as much as he might hold in the palm of his hand. But barely, "That he may dip, (were it but) the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue." No! It cannot be! No mercy can enter within the shades of hell!

8. "But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou, in thy life time, receivedst thy good things, and, likewise, Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Perhaps these words may supply us with an answer to an important question; How came this *rich man* to be in hell? It does not appear that he was a wicked man, in the common sense of the word: that he was a drunkard, a common swearer, a sabbath-breaker, or that he lived in any known sin. It is probable he was a Pharisee, and, as such, was, in all the outward parts of religion, blameless. How then did he come into the *place of torments?* If there were no other reason to be assigned, there is a sufficient one implied in those words: ("He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!") "Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things:"—the things, which thou hadst chosen for thy happiness. Thou hadst set thy affection on things beneath. And thou hadst thy reward. Thou didst receive the portion which thou hadst chosen, and canst have no portion above. "And, likewise, Lazarus evil things."—Not *his* evil things; for he did not choose them. But they were chosen for him by the wise providence of God: and now, "he is comforted, while thou art tormented."

9. "But, beside all this, there is a great gulf fixed."—A great chasm, a vast vacuity. Can any tell us, what this is? What is the nature, what are the bounds of it? Nay, none of the children of men: none but an inhabitant of the invisible world. "So that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Undoubtedly, a disembodied spirit could pass through any space whatever. But the will of God, determining that none should go across that gulf, is a bound which no creature can pass.

10. Then he said, "I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment," ver. 27, 28. Two entirely different motives have been as-

signed for this extraordinary request. Some ascribe it wholly to self-love, to a fear of the bitter reproaches, which, he might easily suppose, his brethren would pour upon him, if, in consequence of his example, and perhaps advice, they came to the same place of torment. Others have imputed it to a nobler motive. They suppose, as the misery of the wicked will not be complete till the day of judgment, so neither will their wickedness. Consequently, they believe, that, till that time, they may retain some sparks of natural affection. And they, not improbably, imagine, that this might have occasioned his desire to prevent their sharing his own torment.

11. "Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them, ver. 29. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent." Who would not be of the same opinion? Might not any one reasonably suppose, that a message, solemnly delivered by one that came from the dead, must have an irresistible force? Who would not think, I myself could not possibly withstand such a preacher of repentance?

II. This, I conceive to be the meaning of the words. I will now endeavour, with the help of God, to apply them. And I beseech you, brethren, while I am doing this, to suffer the word of exhortation. The more closely these things are applied to your souls, the more ye may profit thereby.

1. "There was a certain rich man." And it is no more sinful to be rich than to be poor. But it is dangerous beyond expression. Therefore, I remind all of you that are of this number, that have the conveniences of life, and something over, that ye walk upon slippery ground. Ye continually tread on snares and deaths. Ye are, every moment, on the verge of hell. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Who was clothed in purple and fine linen." And some may have a plea for this: our Lord mentions them that *dwell in king's houses*, as wearing *gorgeous*, that is, splendid *apparel*, and does not blame them for it. But certainly this is no plea, for any that do not dwell in kings' houses. Let all of them, therefore, beware how they follow his example, who is *lifting up his eyes in hell:* let us follow the advice of the Apostle, being "adorned with good works, and with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit."

2. "He fared sumptuously every day." Reconcile this with religion who can. I know how plausibly the prophets of smooth things can talk, in favour of hospitality, of making our friends welcome, of keeping a handsome table, to do honour to religion, of promoting trade, and the like. But God is not mocked; He will not be put off with such pretences as these. Whoever thou art that sharest in the sin of this rich man, were it no other than *faring sumptuously every day*, thou shalt as surely be a sharer in his punishment, except thou repent, as if thou wert already crying for a drop of water to cool thy tongue.

3. "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs

which fell from the rich man's table," ver. 20, 21. But it seems both the rich man and his guests were too *religious* to relieve *common beggars*. A sin of which pious Mr. H. earnestly warns his readers; and an admonition of the same kind, I have read on the gate of the good city of Winchester! I wish the gentleman who placed it there had seen a little circumstance which occurred some years since. At Epworth, in Lincolnshire, the town where I was born, a beggar came to a house in the Market-place, and begged a morsel of bread, saying, "She was very hungry." The master bid her begone, for a lazy jade. She called at a second, and begged a little small beer, saying, "She was very thirsty." She had much the same answer. At a third door she begged a little water, saying, "She was very faint." But this man also was too conscientious to encourage *common beggars*. The boys, seeing a ragged creature turned from door to door, began to pelt her with snow-balls. She looked up, lay down, and died! Would you wish to be the man, who refused that poor wretch a morsel of bread, or a cup of water? "Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores:" being more compassionate than their Master. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Hear this, all ye that are poor in this world. Ye that, many times, have not food to eat, or raiment to put on: ye that have not a place where to lay your head, unless it be a cold garret, or a foul and damp cellar! Ye are now reduced to "solicit the cold hand of charity." Yet lift up your head; it shall not always be thus. I love you, I pity you, I admire you, when, "in patience, ye possess your souls." Yet I cannot help you. But there is one that can, the Father of the fatherless, and the Husband of the widow. "The poor crieth unto the Lord, and he heareth him, and delivereth him out of his troubles." Yet a little while, if ye truly turn to him, his angels shall carry you into Abraham's bosom. There ye shall "hunger no more, and thirst no more:" ye shall feel no more sorrow or pain; but "the Lamb shall wipe away all tears from your eyes, and lead you forth beside fountains of living waters."

4. But see, the scene is changed. "The rich man also died." What! in spite of his riches? Probably sooner than he desired. For how just is that word, "O death, how bitter art thou to a man that is at rest in the midst of his possessions?" However, if that would be a comfort, *he was buried*. But how little did it signify whether he was laid under a lofty monument, or among

> "Graves, with bending osiers crown'd,
> Where numbers heav'd the crumbled ground?"

And what followed? "In hell he lifted his eyes." This, it is certain, ye need not do. God does not require it of you; "He willeth not that any should perish." Ye cannot, unless by your own wilful choice, intruding into those regions of wo, which God did not prepare for *you*, but for the *devil and his angels*.

5. See the scene change again! "He seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." And he knew him: although, perhaps, he had only cast a glance at him, while he "lay at his gates." Are any

of you in doubt, whether we shall know one another in the other world? Here your doubt may receive a full solution. If a soul in hell knew Lazarus in paradise, as *far off* as he was, certainly, those that are together in paradise, will perfectly know each other.

6. "And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy upon me!" I do not remember in all the Bible, any prayer made to a saint, but this. And if we observe, who made it, a man in hell, and with what success, we shall hardly wish to follow the precedent. O let us cry for mercy to God, not to man! And it is our wisdom to cry now, while we are in the land of mercy; otherwise it will be too late! "I am tormented in this flame!" Tormented! observe, not purified. Vain hope, that fire can purify a spirit! As well might you expect water to cleanse the soul, as fire. God forbid that you or I should make the trial!

7. And "Abraham said, Son, remember:"—Mark, how Abraham accosts a damned spirit: and shall we behave with less tenderness to any of the children of God, "because they are not of our opinion?" "Thou, in thy life-time, receivedst thy good things." O, beware it be not your case! Are not the things of the world thy good things? The chief objects of thy desire and pursuit? Are they not thy chief joy? If so, thou art in a very dangerous state, in the very condition which Dives was in upon earth! Do not then dream, that all is well, because thou art "highly esteemed among men:" because thou dost no harm; or dost much good; or attendest all the ordinances of God. What is all this, if thy soul cleave to the dust? If thy heart be in the world: if thou love the creature more than the Creator.

8. How striking are the next words! "Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from us to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." This was the text which occasioned the Epitaph on a right honourable infidel and gamester:—

> "Here lies a Dicer; long in doubt
> If death could kill the soul, or not?
> Here ends his doubtfulness; at last
> Convinc'd;—but, ah! the die is cast!"

But, blessed be God, *your* die is not cast yet. You are not passed the great gulf, but have it still in your power to choose whether you will be attended by angels or fiends, when your soul quits its earthly mansion. Now stretch out your hand to eternal life, or eternal death! And God says, "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt!"

9. Being repulsed in this, he makes another request: "I pray thee, send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren, that he may testify to them."—It is not impossible that other unhappy spirits may wish well to the relations they have left behind them. But this is the accepted time for them, as well as for us. Let us, then, address them ourselves: and let us beg our living friends to give us all the help they can, without waiting for assistance from the inhabitants of another world. Let us earnestly exhort them to use the helps they have; to "hear Moses and the Prophets." We are,

indeed, apt to think, like that unhappy spirit, "If one went to them from the dead, they will repent. But Abraham said, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

III. I am, in the third place, to prove the truth of this weighty sentence, which I will do, first, briefly, and then more at large.

And, First, to express the matter briefly: It is certain that no human spirit, while it is in the body, can *persuade* another *to repent;* can work in him an entire change, both of heart and life; a change, from universal wickedness, to universal holiness. And, suppose that spirit discharged from the body, it is no more able to do this, than it was before: no power less than that which created it at first, can create any soul anew. No angel, much less any human spirit, whether in the body or out of the body, can bring one soul from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. It might very possibly fright him to death, or to the belief of any speculative truth; but it could not fright him into spiritual life. God alone can raise those that are "dead in trespasses and sins."

2. In order to prove more at large, that if men "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be [effectually] persuaded to repent, though one rose from the dead:" I will propose a case of this kind, with all the advantages that can be conceived. Suppose, then, one that does not "hear Moses and the prophets," that does not believe the Scripture to be of God, to be fast asleep in his bed, and suddenly to awake, while the clock was striking one. He is surprised to observe the chamber as light as if it were noon-day. He looks up, and sees one whom he perfectly knew, standing at his bed-side. Though a little surprised at first, he quickly recollects himself, and has the courage to ask, "Are not you my friend, who died at such a time?" He answers, "I am. I am come from God with a message to *you.* You have often wished you could see one risen from the dead, and said, then you *would* repent. You have your wish: and I am ordered to inform you, you are seeking death in the error of your life. If you die in the state you are in now, you will die eternally. I warn you in his name, that the Scriptures are the real word of God; that, from the moment you die, you will be remarkably happy, or unspeakably miserable. That you cannot be happy hereafter, unless you are holy here, which cannot be, unless you are born again. Receive this call from God! Eternity is at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel!" Having spoken these words, he vanishes away, and the room is as dark as it was before.

3. One may easily believe it would be impossible for him not to be convinced for the present. He would sleep no more that night, and would, as soon as possible, tell his family what he had seen and heard. Not content with this, he would be impatient to tell it to his former companions. And, probably, observing the earnestness with which he spoke, they would not then contradict him. They would say to each other, "Give him time to cool; then he will be a reasonable man again."

4. Now it is constantly found, that impressions made on the memory gradually decay: that they grow weaker and weaker in process of time, and the traces of them fainter and fainter. So it must be in this case, which his companions observing, would not fail to seize the opportunity. They would speak to this effect: "It was a strange account you gave us some time since: the more so, because we know *you* to be a sensible man, and not inclined to enthusiasm. But, perhaps, you have not fully considered, how difficult it is, in some cases, to distinguish our dreams from our waking thoughts. Has any one yet been able to find out an infallible criterion between them? Is it not, then, possible, that you may have been asleep, when this lively impression was made on your mind?" When he had been brought to think, *possibly* it might be a dream, they would soon persuade him, *probably* it was so: and not long after, to believe, it *certainly* was a dream. So little would it avail, that one came from the dead!

5. It could not be expected to be otherwise. For what was the effect which was wrought upon him! 1. He was exceedingly frightened. 2. This fright made way for a deeper conviction of the truth then declared. But, 3. His heart was not changed. None but the Almighty could effect this. Therefore, the bias of his soul was still set the wrong way: he still loved the world, and, consequently, wished that the Scripture was not true. How easily, then, as the fright wore off, would he again believe what he wished! The conclusion, then, is plain and undeniable. If men "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded to repent and believe the gospel, though one rose from the dead."

6. We may add one consideration more, which brings the matter to a full issue. Before, or about the same time, that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom, another Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was actually raised from the dead. But were even those who believed the fact, persuaded to repent? So far from it, that "they took counsel, to kill Lazarus," as well as his Master! Away, then, with the fond imagination, that those who "hear not Moses and the Prophets, would be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

7. From the whole we may draw this general conclusion, That standing Revelation is the best mean of rational conviction: far preferable to any of those extraordinary means which some imagine would be more effectual. It is, therefore, our wisdom, to avail ourselves of this: to make full use of it, so that it may be a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths. Let us take care, that our whole heart and life be conformable thereto; that it be the constant rule of all our tempers, all our words, and all our actions. So shall we preserve in all things the testimony of a good conscience toward God: and when our course is finished, we too shall be "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

Birmingham,
March 25, 1788.

SERMON XLIX.

ON THE WILDERNESS STATE.

"*Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*"—JOHN xvi. 22.

1. AFTER God had wrought a great deliverance for Israel, by bringing them out of the house of bondage, they did not immediately enter into the land which he had promised to their fathers, but "wandered out of the way in the wilderness," and were variously tempted and distressed. In like manner, after God has delivered them that fear him from the bondage of sin and Satan; after they are "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus," yet, not many of them immediately enter into *the rest* which *remaineth for the people of God.* The greater part of them wander, more or less, out of the good way into which he hath brought them. They come, as it were, into a *waste and howling desert,* where they are variously tempted and tormented. And this, some, in allusion to the case of the Israelites, have termed, *A Wilderness State.*

2. Certain it is, that the condition wherein these are, has a right to the tenderest compassion. They labour under an evil and sore disease: though one that is not commonly understood: and for this very reason it is the more difficult for them to find a remedy. Being in darkness themselves, they cannot be supposed to understand the nature of their own disorder. And few of their brethren, nay, perhaps, of their teachers, know either what their sickness is, or how to heal it. So much the more need there is to inquire, First, What is the nature of the disease? Secondly, What is the cause? and, Thirdly, What is the cure of it?

I. And, first, What is the nature of this disease, into which so many fall, after they have believed? Wherein does it properly consist? And what are the genuine symptoms of it? It properly consists in the loss of that faith, which God once wrought in their hearts. They that are *in the wilderness,* have not now that divine *evidence,* that satisfactory "conviction of things not seen," which they once enjoyed. They have not now that inward demonstration of the Spirit, which before enabled each of them to say, "The life I live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The light of heaven does not now "shine in their hearts," neither do they "see him that is invisible:" but darkness is again on the face of their souls, and

blindness on the face of their understanding. The Spirit no longer "witnesses with their spirits, that they are the children of God:" neither does he continue as the Spirit of Adoption, "crying in their hearts, Abba, Father." They have not now a sure trust in his love, and a liberty of approaching him with holy boldness. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is no more the language of their heart; but they are shorn of their strength, and become weak and feeble-minded, even as other men.

2. Hence, Secondly, proceeds the loss of love, which cannot but rise or fall, at the same time, and in the same proportion, with true, living faith. Accordingly, they that are deprived of their faith, are deprived of the love of God also. They cannot now say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." They are not now happy in God, as every one is that truly loves him. They do not delight in him as in time past, and "smell the odour of his ointments." Once, all their "desire was unto him, and to the remembrance of his Name." But now, even their desires are cold and dead, if not utterly extinguished. And as their love of God is waxed cold, so is also their love of their neighbour. They have not now that zeal for the souls of men, that longing after their welfare, that fervent, restless, active desire of their being reconciled to God. They do not feel those "bowels of mercies" for the sheep that are lost, that tender "compassion for the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." Once they were "gentle toward all men," meekly *instructing* such as *opposed* the truth, and, "if any were overtaken in a fault, restoring such a one in the spirit of meekness." But, after a suspense, perhaps, of many days, anger begins to regain its power. Yea, peevishness and impatience thrust sore at them, that they may fall; and it is well if they are not sometimes driven, even to "render evil for evil, and railing for railing."

3. In consequence of the loss of faith and love, follows, Thirdly, Loss of joy in the Holy Ghost. For, if the loving consciousness of pardon be no more, the joy resulting therefrom cannot remain. If the Spirit do not witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, the joy that flowed from the inward witness, must also be at an end. And in like manner, they who once "rejoiced with joy unspeakable, in hope of the glory of God," now they are deprived of that "hope full of immortality," are deprived of the joy it occasioned: as also of that which resulted from a consciousness of "the love of God," then "shed abroad in their hearts." For the cause being removed, so is the effect: the fountain being dammed up, those living waters spring no more, to refresh the thirsty soul.

4. With loss of faith, and love, and joy, there is also joined, Fourthly, The loss of that peace, which once passed all understanding. That sweet tranquillity of mind, that composure of spirit, is gone. Painful doubt returns: doubt, whether we ever did, and, perhaps, whether we ever shall believe. We begin to doubt, whether we ever did find in our hearts the real testimony of the Spirit; whether we did not rather deceive our own souls, and mistake the voice

of nature for the voice of God; nay, and perhaps, whether we shall ever hear his voice, and find favour in his sight. And these doubts are again joined with servile fear, with that *fear* which *hath torment.* We fear the wrath of God, even as before we believed: we fear, lest we should be cast out of his presence; and thence sink again into that fear of death, from which we were before wholly delivered.

5. But even this is not all: for loss of peace is accompanied with loss of power. We know, every one who has peace with God, through Jesus Christ, has power over all sin. But whenever he loses the peace of God, he loses also the power over sin. While that peace remained, power also remained, even over the besetting sin; whether it were the sin of his nature, his constitution, the sin of his education, or that of his profession: yea, and over those evil tempers and desires, which, till then, he could not conquer. *Sin* had then *no more dominion over him:* but he hath now no more dominion over sin. He may struggle, indeed, but he cannot overcome: the crown is fallen from his head. His enemies again prevail over him, and more or less bring him into bondage. The glory is departed from him, even the kingdom of God which was in his heart. He is dispossessed of righteousness, as well as of peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.

II. 1. Such is the nature of what many have termed, and not improperly, *The Wilderness State.* But the nature of it may be more fully understood by inquiring, Secondly, What are the causes of it? These, indeed, are various. But I dare not rank among those, the bare, arbitrary, sovereign will of God. He "rejoiceth in the prosperity of his servants: he delighteth not to afflict or grieve the children of men." His invariable will is our sanctification, attended with "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." These are his own free gifts: and we are assured "the gifts of God are," on his part "without repentance." He never repenteth of what he hath given, or desires to withdraw them from us. Therefore, he never *deserts* us, as some speak: it is we only that *desert* him.

2. The most usual cause of inward darkness is sin, of one kind or another. This it is which generally occasions what is often a complication of sin and misery. And, first, sin of commission. This may frequently be observed to darken the soul in a moment; especially, if it be a known, a wilful, or presumptuous sin. If, for instance, a person who is now walking in the clear light of God's countenance, should be any way prevailed on to commit a single act of drunkenness, or uncleanness, it would be no wonder, if, in that very hour, he fell into utter darkness. It is true, there have been some very rare cases, wherein God has prevented this, by an extraordinary display of his pardoning mercy, almost in the very instant. But in general, such an abuse of the goodness of God, so gross an insult on his love, occasions an immediate estrangement from God, and a "darkness that may be felt."

3. But it may be hoped, this case is not very frequent. That there are not many, who so despise the riches of his goodness, as while

they walk in his light, so grossly, and presumptuously to rebel against him. That light is much more frequently lost, by giving way to sins of omission. This, indeed, does not immediately quench the Spirit, but gradually and slowly. The former may be compared to pouring water upon a fire: the latter to withdrawing the fuel from it. And many times will that loving Spirit reprove our neglect, before he departs from us. Many are the inward checks, the secret notices he gives, before his influences are withdrawn. So that only a train of omissions, wilfully persisted in, can bring us into utter darkness.

4. Perhaps no sin of omission more frequently occasions this, than the neglect of private prayer; the want whereof cannot be supplied by any other ordinance whatever. Nothing can be more plain, than that the life of God in the soul does not continue, much less increase, unless we use all opportunities of communion with God, and pouring out our hearts before him. If, therefore, we are negligent of this, if we suffer business, company, or any avocation whatever, to prevent these secret exercises of the soul, (or, which comes to the same thing, to make us hurry them over in a slight and careless manner,) that life will surely decay. And if we long or frequently intermit them, it will gradually die away.

5. Another sin of omission, which frequently brings the soul of a believer into darkness, is the neglect of what was so strongly enjoined, even under the Jewish dispensation, "Thou shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." Now if we do *hate our brother in our heart*, if we do not *rebuke* him, when we see him in a fault, but *suffer sin upon him;* this will soon bring leanness into our own soul; seeing, hereby we are *partakers of his sin*. By neglecting to reprove our neighbour, we make his sin our own. We become accountable for it to God: we saw his danger, and gave him no warning. So, "if he perish in his iniquity," God may justly "require his blood at our hand." No wonder then, if by thus grieving the Spirit, we lose the light of his countenance.

6. A third cause of our losing this is, the giving way to some kind of *inward sin*. For example: we know, every one that is "proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord;" and that, although this pride of heart should not appear in the outward conversation. Now how easily may a soul, filled with peace and joy, fall into this snare of the devil? How natural is it for him to imagine, that he has more grace, more wisdom or strength, than he really has? To "think more highly than he ought to think?" How natural, to glory in something he has received, as if he had not received it? But seeing God continually "resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble," this must certainly obscure, if not wholly destroy, the light which before shone on his heart.

7. The same effect may be produced by giving place to anger, whatever the provocation or occasion be: yea, though it were coloured over with the name of *zeal* for the truth, or for the glory of God. Indeed, all zeal, which is any other than the flame of love, is "earthly,

sensual, and devilish." It is the flame of wrath ; it is flat, sinful anger, neither better nor worse.—And nothing is a greater enemy to the mild, gentle love of God than this : They never did, they never can subsist together in one breast. In the same proportion as this prevails, love and joy in the Holy Ghost decrease. This is particularly observable in the case of *offence;* I mean, anger at any of our brethren, at any of those who are united with us, by civil or religious ties. If we give way to the spirit of offence but one hour, we lose the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit ; so that, instead of amending them, we destroy ourselves, and become an easy prey to any enemy that assaults us.

8. But suppose we are aware of this snare of the devil, we may be attacked from another quarter. When fierceness and anger are asleep, and love alone is waking, we may be no less endangered by *desire*, which equally tends to darken the soul. This is the sure effect of any foolish desire, any vain or inordinate affection. If we set our affection on things of the earth, on any person or thing under the sun ; if we seek happiness in any creature : the jealous God will surely contend with us ; for he cannot admit of any rival : and if we *will* not *hear* his warning *voice*, and return to him with our whole soul ; if we continue to grieve him with our idols, and running after other gods, we shall soon be cold, barren, and dry, and *the god of this world* will *blind* and darken *our hearts*.

9. But this he frequently does, even when we do not give way to any positive sin. It is enough, it gives him sufficient advantage, if we do not "stir up the gift of God, which is in us;" if we do not *agonize* continually "to enter in at the strait gate," if we do not earnestly "strive for the mastery," and "take the kingdom of heaven by violence." There needs no more than not to fight, and we are sure to be conquered. Let us only be careless or "faint in our minds ;" let us be easy and indolent, and our natural darkness will soon return, and overspread our souls. It is enough, therefore, if we give way to *spiritual sloth:* this will effectually darken the soul. It will as surely destroy the light of God, if not so swiftly, as murder and adultery.

10. But it is well to be observed, that the cause of our darkness (whatsoever it be, whether omission or commission, whether inward or outward sin) is not always nigh at hand. Sometimes the sin, which occasioned the present distress, may lie at a considerable distance. It might be committed days, or weeks, or months before. And that God now withdraws his light and peace, on account of what was done so long ago, is not (as one might at first imagine) an instance of his severity, but rather a proof of his long suffering and tender mercy. He waited all this time, if haply we would see, acknowledge, and correct what was amiss. And in default of this, he at length shows his displeasure, if thus, at last, he may bring us to repentance.

(II.) 1. Another general cause of this darkness, is *ignorance;* which is likewise of various kinds. If men know not the Scriptures, if they imagine there are passages either in the Old or New Testa-

ment, which assert that all believers without exception, *must* sometimes be in darkness, this ignorance will naturally bring upon them the darkness which they expect. And how common a case has this been among us? How few are there, who do not expect it? And no wonder, seeing they are taught to expect it: seeing their guides lead them into this way. Not only the mystic writers of the *Romish* Church, but many of the most spiritual and experimental in our own, (very few of the last century excepted) lay it down with all assurance, as a plain, unquestionable scriptural doctrine, and cite many texts to prove it.

2. Ignorance also of the work of God in the soul, frequently occasions this darkness. Men imagine, (because so they have been taught, particularly by writers of the *Romish* communion, whose plausible assertions too many Protestants have received without due examination,) that they are not always to walk in *luminous faith;* that this is only a *lower dispensation;* that as they rise higher, they are to leave those *sensible comforts*, and to live by *naked faith:* (*naked* indeed, if it be stripped both of love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost!) That a state of light and joy, is good; but a state of *darkness* and *dryness* is better: that it is by these alone we can be *purified* from pride, love of the world, and inordinate self-love; and that therefore we ought neither to expect nor desire, to *walk in the light* always. Hence it is, (though other reasons may occur,) that the main body of pious men in the *Romish* church, generally walk in a dark uncomfortable way, and if ever they receive, soon lose the light of God.

(III.) 1. A third general cause of this darkness, is temptation. When the candle of the Lord first shines in our head, temptation frequently flees away, and totally disappears. All is calm within: perhaps without too, while God makes our enemies to be at peace with us. It is then very natural to suppose, that we shall not see war any more. And there are instances, wherein this calm has continued, not only for weeks, but for months or years. But commonly it is otherwise: in a short time "the winds blow, the rains descend, and the floods arise" anew. *They* who *know not either the Son, or the Father*, and consequently, hate his children, when God slackens the bridle which is in their teeth, will show that hatred in various instances. As of old, "he that is born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit;" even so it is now; the same cause still producing the same effect. The evil which yet remains in the heart, will then also move afresh: anger and many other *roots of bitterness*, will endeavour to spring up. At the same time, Satan will not be wanting, to cast in his fiery darts: and the soul will have to *wrestle*, not only with the world, *not* only "with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with wicked spirits in high places." Now when so various assaults are made at once, and perhaps with the utmost violence, it is not strange if it should occasion, not only heaviness, but even darkness in a weak believer. More especially, if he was not watch-

ing, if these assaults are made in an hour when we look not for them: if he expected nothing less, but had fondly told himself,—"The day of evil would return no more."

2. The force of those temptations which arise from within, will be exceedingly heightened, if we before thought too highly of ourselves, as if we had been cleansed from all sin. And how naturally do we imagine this, during the warmth of our first love? How ready are we to believe, that God has *fulfilled in* us *the* whole *work of faith with power?* That because we *feel* no sin, we *have* none in us, but the soul is all love! And well may a sharp attack from an enemy, whom we suppose to be not only conquered, but slain, throw us into much heaviness of soul, yea, sometimes into utter darkness. Particularly when we *reason* with this enemy, instead of instantly calling upon God, and casting ourselves upon him, by simple faith, who "alone knoweth how to deliver his out of temptation."

III. These are the usual causes of this second darkness. Inquire we, Thirdly, What is the cure of it?

1. To suppose that this is one and the same in all cases, is a great and fatal mistake: and yet extremely common even among many, who passed for experienced Christians: yea, perhaps take upon them to be *teachers in Israel*, to be the guides of other souls. Accordingly they know and use but one medicine, whatever be the cause of the distemper. They begin immediately to apply the promises, to *preach the gospel*, as they call it. To give comfort, is the single point at which they aim: in order to which they say many soft and tender things, concerning the love of God to poor, helpless sinners, and the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Now this is *quackery* indeed, and that of the worst sort, as it tends, if not to kill men's bodies, yet without the peculiar mercy of God, "to destroy both their bodies and souls in hell." It is hard to speak of these "daubers with untempered mortar," these promise-mongers, as they deserve. They well deserve the title, which has been ignorantly given to others: they are *spiritual mountebanks.* They do, in effect, make "the blood of the covenant an unholy thing." They vilely prostitute the promises of God, by thus applying them to all, without distinction. Whereas, indeed, the cure of spiritual, as of bodily diseases, must be as various as the causes of them. The first thing, therefore, is, to find out the cause, and this will naturally point out the cure.

2. For instance. Is it sin, which occasions darkness? What sin? Is it outward sin of any kind? Does your conscience accuse you of committing any sin, whereby you grieve the Holy Spirit of God? Is it on this account, that he is departed from you, and that joy and peace are departed with him? and how can you expect they should return, till you put away the accursed thing: "Let the wicked forsake his way;" "cleanse your hands, ye sinners," "put away the evil of your doings." So shall your "light break out of obscurity:" "the Lord will return, and abundantly pardon."

3. If upon the closest search, you can find no sin of commission, which causes the cloud upon your soul, inquire next, if there be not

some sin of omission, which separates between God and you. Do you "not suffer sin upon your brother?" Do you reprove them that sin in your sight? Do you walk in all the ordinances of God? In public, in family, in private prayer? If not; if you habitually neglect any one of these known duties, how can you expect, that the light of his countenance should continue to shine upon you? Make haste to "strengthen the things that remain:" then your souls shall live. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," he will by his grace supply what is lacking. When you hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way: walk you in it:" harden not your heart: Be no more disobedient to the heavenly calling. Till the sin, whether of omission or commission, be removed, all comfort is false and deceitful. It is only skinning the wound over, which still festers and rankles beneath. Look for no peace within, till you are at peace with God: which cannot be without "fruits meet for repentance."

4. But, perhaps, you are not conscious of even any *sin of omission*, which impairs your peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Is there not, then, some *inward sin*, which, as a "root of bitterness, springs up" in your heart to "trouble you?" Is not your dryness, or barrenness of soul, occasioned by your hearts "departing from the living God?" Has not "the foot of pride come against" you? Have you not *thought* of yourself "more highly than you ought to think?" Have you not, in any respect, "sacrificed to your own net, and burnt incense to your own drag?" Have you not ascribed your success in any undertaking to your own courage, or strength, or wisdom? Have you not boasted of something "you have received, as though you had not received it?" Have you not gloried in any thing, "save the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Have you not sought after or desired the praise of men? Have you not taken pleasure in it? If so, you see the way you are to take. If you have fallen by pride, "humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time." Have you not forced him to depart from you, by giving place to anger? Have you not "fretted yourself because of the ungodly," or "been envious against the evil doers?" Have you not been offended at any of your brethren? Looking at their (real or imagined) sin, so as to sin yourself against the great law of love, by estranging your heart from them? Then look unto the Lord, that you may renew your strength, that all this sharpness and coldness may be done away, that love, and peace, and joy, may return together, and you may be invariably kind to each other, and "tender hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Have not you given way to any foolish desire? To any kind or degree of inordinate affection? How then can the love of God have place in your heart, till you put away your idols? "Be not deceived: God is not mocked:" he will not dwell in a divided heart: As long, therefore, as you cherish Delilah in your bosom, he has no place there: It is vain to hope for a recovery of his light, till you pluck out the right eye, and cast it from you. O, let there be no longer delay! Cry to him, that he may enable you

so to do! Bewail your own impotence and helplessness: and, the Lord being your helper, enter in at the strait gate: take the kingdom of heaven by violence! Cast out every idol from his sanctuary, and the glory of the Lord shall soon appear.

5. Perhaps it is this very thing, the want of striving, *spiritual sloth*, which keeps your soul in darkness. You dwell at ease in the land: there is no war in your coasts, and so you are quiet and unconcerned. You go on in the same even tract of outward duties, and are content there to abide. And do you wonder, meantime, that your soul is dead? O, stir yourself up before the Lord! Arise, and shake yourself from the dust: Wrestle with God for the mighty blessing. Pour out your soul unto God in prayer, and continue therein with all perseverance. Watch! Awake out of sleep, and keep awake! Otherwise, there is nothing to be expected, but that you will be alienated, more and more, from the light and life of God.

6. If, upon the fullest and most impartial examination of yourself, you cannot discern that you at present give way, either to spiritual sloth, or any other inward or outward sin, then call to mind the time that is past. Consider your former tempers, words, and actions. Have these been right before the Lord? "Commune with him in your chamber, and be still," and desire of him to try the ground of your heart, and bring to your remembrance whatever has at any time offended the eyes of his glory. If the guilt of any unrepented sin remain on your soul, it cannot be but you will remain in darkness, till, having been renewed by repentance, you are again washed by faith in "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness."

7. Entirely different will be the manner of the cure, if the cause of the disease be not sin, but ignorance. It may be, ignorance of the meaning of Scripture: perhaps occasioned by ignorant commentators; ignorant, at least, in this respect, however knowing and learned they may be in other particulars. And, in this case, that ignorance must be removed, before we can remove the darkness arising from it. We must show the true meaning of those texts which have been misunderstood. My design does not permit me to consider all the passages of Scripture which have been pressed into this service. I shall just mention two or three, which are frequently brought to prove, that all believers must, sooner or later, "walk in darkness."

8. One of these is, Isaiah l. 10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." But, how does it appear, either from the text or context, that the person here spoken of, ever had light? One, who is convinced of sin, "feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant." And him we should advise, though he were still dark of soul, and had never seen the light of God's countenance, yet to "trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." This text, therefore, proves nothing less than that a believer in Christ "must sometimes *walk in darkness*."

9. Another text, which has been supposed to speak the same doc-

trine, is Hosea ii. 14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her." Hence it has been inferred, that God will bring every believer *into the wilderness*, into a state of deadness and darkness. But, it is certain, the text speaks no such thing; for it does not appear that it speaks of particular believers at all. It manifestly refers to the Jewish nation; and, perhaps, to that only. But, if it be applicable to particular persons, the plain meaning of it is this: I will draw him by love; I will next convince him of sin, and then comfort him by my pardoning mercy.

10. A third scripture, from whence the same inference has been drawn, is that above recited, "Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again; and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." This has been supposed to imply, that God would, after a time, withdraw himself from all believers; and that they could not, till after they had thus sorrowed, have the joy which no man could take from them. But the whole context shows, that our Lord is here speaking personally to the Apostles, and no others; and that he is speaking concerning those particular events, his own death and resurrection. "A little while," says he, "and ye shall not see me." viz. whilst I am in the grave: "And again, a little while, and ye shall see me," when I am risen from the dead. "Ye will weep and lament, and the world will rejoice: but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." —"Ye now have sorrow," because I am about to be taken from your head: "but I will see you again," after my resurrection, "and your heart shall rejoice."—"And your joy," which I will then give you, "no man taketh from you." All this, we know, was literally fulfilled, in the particular case of the Apostles. But no inference can be drawn from hence, with regard to God's dealings with believers in general.

11. A fourth text, (to mention no more,) which has been frequently cited in proof of the same doctrine, is, 1 Pet. iv. 12, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." But this is full as foreign to the point as the preceding. The text, literally rendered, runs thus: "Beloved, wonder not at the burning, which is among you, which is for your trial." Now, however this may be accommodated to inward trials in a secondary sense, yet, primarily, it doubtless refers to martyrdom, and the sufferings connected with it. Neither, therefore, is this text any thing at all to the purpose, for which it is cited. And we may challenge all men to bring one text, either from the Old or New Testament, which is any more to the purpose than this.

12. "But is not darkness much more profitable for the soul than light? Is not the work of God in the heart most swiftly and effectually carried on, during a state of inward suffering? Is not a believer more swiftly and thoroughly purified by sorrow than by joy?—by anguish, and pain, and distress, and spiritual martyrdoms, than by continual peace?" So the mystics teach: so it is written in their books; but not in the Oracles of God. The Scripture no where says, that the absence of God best perfects his work in the heart!

Rather, his presence, and a clear communion with the Father and the Son. A strong consciousness of this, will do more in an hour, than his absence in an age. Joy in the Holy Ghost will far more effectually purify the soul, than the want of that joy; and the peace of God is the best mean of refining the soul from the dross of earthly affections. Away, then, with the idle conceit, that the kingdom of God is divided against itself; that the peace of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are obstructive of righteousness; and that *we are saved*, not *by faith*, but by unbelief; not by hope, but by despair!

13. So long as men dream thus, they may well "walk in darkness:" nor can the effect cease, till the cause is removed. But yet, we must not imagine it will immediately cease, even when the cause is no more. When either ignorance or sin has caused darkness, one or the other may be removed, and yet the light which was obstructed thereby, may not immediately return. As it is the free gift of God, he may restore it, sooner or later, as it pleases him. In the case of sin, we cannot reasonably expect that it should immediately return. The sin began before the punishment, which may, therefore, justly remain, after the sin is at an end. And, even, in the natural course of things, though a wound cannot be healed while the dart is sticking in the flesh, yet, neither is it healed as soon as that is drawn out; but soreness and pain may remain long after.

14. Lastly: If darkness be occasioned by manifold, and heavy, and unexpected temptations, the best way of removing and preventing this is, to teach believers always to expect temptation: seeing they dwell in an evil world, among wicked, subtle, malicious spirits, and have a heart capable of all evil. Convince them, that the whole work of Sanctification is not, as they imagined, wrought at once: that, when they first believed, they are but as new-born babes, who are gradually to grow up, and may expect many storms, before they come to the full stature of Christ. Above all, let them be instructed, when the storm is upon them, not to reason with the devil, but to pray; to pour out their souls before God, and show him of their trouble. And these are the persons, unto whom, chiefly, we are to apply the great and precious promises: not to the ignorant, till the ignorance is removed; much less to the impenitent sinner. To these we may largely and affectionately declare the loving kindness of God our Saviour, and expatiate upon his tender mercies, which have been ever of old. Here we may dwell upon the faithfulness of God, whose "word is tried to the uttermost," and upon the virtue of that blood, which was shed for us, to "cleanse us from all sin." And God will then bear witness to his word, and bring their souls out of trouble. He will say, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Yea, and that light, if thou walk humbly and closely with God, will shine more and more "unto the perfect day."

SERMON L.

ON HEAVINESS THROUGH MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS.

"*Now, for a season, if need be, ye are in Heaviness, through manifold Temptations.*"—1 PETER i. 6.

1. IN the preceding discourse, I have particularly spoken of that *darkness* of mind, into which those are often observed to fall, who once walked in the light of God's countenance. Nearly related to this is the *heaviness* of soul, which is still more common, even among believers. Indeed, almost all the children of God experience this, in a higher or lower degree. And, so great is the resemblance between one and the other, that they are frequently confounded together: and we are apt to say, indifferently, Such an one is in *darkness*, or, such an one is in *heaviness;* as if they were equivalent terms, one of which implied no more than the other. But they are far, very far from it. Darkness is one thing; heaviness is another. There is a difference, yea, a wide and essential difference, between the former and the latter. And such a difference it is, as all the children of God are deeply concerned to understand: otherwise, nothing will be more easy than for them to slide out of heaviness into darkness. In order to prevent this, I will endeavour to show,

I. What manner of persons those were, to whom the Apostle says, "Ye are in heaviness:"

II. What kind of heaviness they were in:

III. What were the causes: and,

IV. What were the ends of it. I shall conclude with some inferences.

I. 1. I am, in the First place, to show, What manner of persons those were, to whom the Apostle says, "Ye are in heaviness." And, First, It is beyond all dispute, that they were believers at the time the Apostle thus addressed them. For so he expressly says, ver. 5, "Ye who are kept through the power of God by faith unto salvation." Again, ver. 7, he mentions "the trial of their faith, much more precious than that of gold, which perisheth." And yet, again, ver. 9, he speaks of their "receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls." At the same time, therefore, that they were "in heaviness," they were possessed of living faith. Their

heaviness did not destroy their faith: they still "endured, as seeing him that is invisible."

2. Neither did their heaviness destroy their peace, the peace which passeth all understanding, which is inseparable from true, living faith. This we may easily gather from the second verse, wherein the Apostle prays, not that *peace* may be given them, but only, that it may be multiplied unto them; that the blessing which they already enjoyed, might be more abundantly bestowed upon them.

3. The persons to whom the Apostle here speaks, were also full of a living hope. For thus he speaks, ver. 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again," me and you, all of us who are "sanctified by the Spirit," and enjoy the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," "unto a living hope, to an inheritance," that is, unto a living hope of an inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." So that, notwithstanding their heaviness, they still retained a hope full of immortality.

4. And they still "rejoiced in hope of the glory of God." They were filled with joy in the Holy Ghost. So, ver. 8, the Apostle having just mentioned the final "Revelation of Jesus Christ," (namely, when he cometh to judge the world,) immediately adds, "In whom, though now ye see him not," (not with your bodily eyes,) "yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Their heaviness, therefore, was not only consistent with a living hope, but also with *joy unspeakable:* at the same time they were thus heavy, they, nevertheless, rejoiced with *joy full of glory.*

5. In the midst of their heaviness, they likewise still enjoyed the love of God, which had been shed abroad in their hearts;—"whom," says the Apostle, "having not seen, ye love." Though ye have not seen him face to face, yet, knowing him by faith, ye have obeyed his word, "My son, give me thy heart." He is your God, and your Love, the desire of your eyes, and your "exceeding great reward." Ye have sought, and found happiness in him: ye "delight in the Lord, and he hath given you your hearts' desire."

6. Once more. Though they were heavy, yet were they holy: they retained the same power over sin. They were still "kept" from this "by the power of God:" they were "obedient children, not fashioned according to their former desires," but, "as he that had called them is holy," so were they "holy in all manner of conversation." Knowing they were "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without spot and without blemish," they had, through the faith and hope which they had in God, "purified their souls by the Spirit." So that, upon the whole, their heaviness well consisted with faith, with hope, with love of God and man, with joy in the Holy Ghost, with inward and outward holiness. It did no way impair, much less destroy, any part of the work of God in their hearts. It did not at all interfere with the "sanctification of the Spirit," which is the root of all true *obedi-*

ence; neither with the happiness, which must needs result from *grace and peace*, reigning in the heart.

II. 1. Hence we may easily learn what kind of heaviness they were in: the Second thing which I shall endeavour to show. The word in the original is λυπηθεντες, *made sorry*, *grieved*, from λυπη, *grief*, or *sorrow*. This is the constant, literal meaning of the word: and, this being observed, there is no ambiguity in the expression, nor any difficulty in understanding it. The persons spoken of here, were *grieved:* The heaviness they were in was neither more nor less than *sorrow*, or *grief;* a passion, which every child of man is well acquainted with.

2. It is probable our translators rendered it *heaviness*, (though a less common word,) to denote two things, First, the degree; and next, The continuance of it. It does, indeed, seem, that it is not a slight or inconsiderable degree of grief which is here spoken of, but such as makes a strong impression upon, and sinks deep into, the soul. Neither does this appear to be a transient sorrow, such as passes away in an hour: but, rather, such as, having taken fast hold of the heart, is not presently shaken off, but continues, for some time, as a settled temper, rather than a passion, even in them that have a living faith in Christ, and the genuine love of God in their hearts.

3. Even in these, this heaviness may sometimes be so deep, as to overshadow the whole soul, to give a colour, as it were, to all the affections, such as will appear in the whole behaviour. It may likewise have an influence over the body: particularly in those that are either of a naturally weak constitution, or are weakened by some accidental disorder, especially of the nervous kind. In many cases we find "the corruptible body presses down the soul:" in this, the soul rather presses down the body, and weakens it more and more. Nay, I will not say, that deep and lasting sorrow of heart, may not, sometimes, weaken a strong constitution, and lay the foundation of such bodily disorders, as are not easily removed. And yet all this may consist with a measure of that *faith which* still *worketh by love.*

4. This may well be termed a *fiery trial:* and though it is not the same that the Apostle speaks of in the fourth chapter, yet many of the expressions there used concerning outward suffering, may be accommodated to this inward affliction. They cannot, indeed, with any propriety, be applied to them that are *in darkness:* these do not, cannot *rejoice;* neither is it true, that "the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon" them. But he frequently doth on those that are *in heaviness*, so that, though *sorrowful, yet* are they *always rejoicing.*

III. 1. But to proceed to the Third point, What are the causes of such sorrow or heaviness in a true believer? The Apostle tells us clearly; "Ye are in heaviness," says he, "through manifold temptations:" ποικιλοις, *manifold;* not only many in number, but of many kinds. They may be varied and diversified a thousand ways, by the change or addition of numberless circumstances. And this diversity and variety make it more difficult to guard against them. Among

these, we may rank all bodily disorders: particularly, acute diseases, and violent pain of every kind, whether affecting the whole body, or the smallest part of it. It is true, some, who have enjoyed uninterrupted health, and have felt none of these, may make light of them, and wonder that sickness, or pain of body, should bring heaviness upon the mind. And, perhaps, one in a thousand is of so peculiar a constitution, as not to feel pain, like other men. So hath it pleased God to show his almighty power by producing some of these prodigies of nature, who have seemed not to regard pain at all, though of the severest kind; if that contempt of pain were not owing partly to the force of education, partly to a preternatural cause; to the power either of good or evil spirits, who raised those men above the state of mere nature. But, abstracting from these particular cases, it is, in general, a just observation, that

> "Pain is perfect misery, and extreme—
> Quite overturns all patience."

And even where this is prevented by the grace of God, where men do "possess their souls in patience," it may, nevertheless, occasion much inward heaviness, the soul sympathizing with the body.

2. All diseases of long continuance, are apt to produce the same effect. When God *appoints over* us *consumption*, or *the chilling and burning ague*, if it be not speedily removed, it will not only "consume the eyes," but "cause sorrow of heart." This is eminently the case, with regard to all those which are termed *nervous disorders*. And faith does not overturn the course of nature: natural causes still produce natural effects. Faith no more hinders the *sinking of the spirits* (as it is called) in an hysteric illness, than the rising of the pulse in a fever.

3. Again, when "calamity cometh as a whirlwind, and poverty as an armed man," is this a little temptation? Is it strange if it occasion sorrow and heaviness? Although this also may appear but a small thing to those that stand at a distance, or who look, and "pass on the other side," yet it is otherwise to them who feel it. "Having food and raiment," (indeed, the latter word, σκεπασματα, implies lodging, as well as apparel) we may, if the love of God is in our hearts, "be therewith content." But what shall they do, who have none of these? Who, as it were, "embrace the rocks for a shelter?" Who have only the earth to lie upon, and only the sky to cover them? Who have not a dry, or warm, much less a clean abode for themselves and their little ones? No, nor clothing to keep themselves, or those they love next themselves, from pinching cold, either by day or night? I laugh at the stupid heathen, crying out,

> Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
> Quam quod ridiculos homines facit!

Has poverty nothing worse in it than this, that it *makes men liable to be laughed at?* It is a sign this idle poet talked by rote of the things

which he knew not. Is not want of food something worse than this? God pronounced it as a curse upon man, that he should earn it by "the sweat of his brow." But how many are there in this Christian country, that toil, and labour, and sweat, and have it not at last, but struggle with weariness and hunger together? Is it not worse, for one, after a hard day's labour, to come back to a poor, cold, dirty, uncomfortable lodging, and to find there not even the food which is needful to repair his wasted strength? You that live at ease in the earth, that want nothing but eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to understand how well God hath dealt with you; is it not worse to seek bread day by day and find none? Perhaps, to find the comfort also of five or six children, crying for what he has not to give! Were it not that he is restrained by an unseen hand, would he not soon *curse God and die?* O want of bread! Want of bread! Who can tell what this means, unless he that hath felt it himself? I am astonished, it occasions no more than heaviness even in them that believe!

4. Perhaps, next to this, we may place the death of those who were near and dear unto us: of a tender parent, and one not much declined into the vale of years; of a beloved child, just rising into life, and clasping about our heart; of a friend that was as our own soul, next the grace of God, the last, best gift of heaven. And a thousand circumstances may enhance the distress: Perhaps, the child, the friend, died in our embrace! Perhaps, was snatched away, when we looked not for it! Flourishing, cut down like a flower! In all these cases, we not only may, but ought to be affected: it is the design of God that we should. He would not have us stocks and stones. He would have our affections regulated, not extinguished. Therefore—"Nature unreprov'd may drop a tear." There may be sorrow without sin.

5. A still deeper sorrow we may feel, for those who are dead while they live;—on account of the unkindness, ingratitude, apostacy of those, who were united to us in the closest ties. Who can express what a lover of souls may feel for a friend, a brother dead to God? For a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, rushing into sin, as a horse into the battle, and, in spite of all arguments and persuasions, hasting to work out his own damnation? And this anguish of spirit may be heightened to an inconceivable degree, by the consideration, that he, who is now posting to destruction, once ran well in the way of life. Whatever he was in time past, serves now to no other purpose, than to make our reflections on what he is, more piercing and afflictive.

6. In all these circumstances, we may be assured, our great adversary will not be wanting to improve his opportunity. He, who is always "walking about, seeking whom he may devour," will then, especially, use all his power, all his skill, if haply he may gain any advantage over the soul that is already cast down. He will not be sparing of his fiery darts, such as are most likely to find an entrance, and to fix most deeply in the heart, by their suitableness to the

temptation that assaults it. He will labour to inject unbelieving, or blasphemous, or repining thoughts. He will suggest, that God does not regard, does not govern the earth: or, at least, that he does not govern it aright, not by the rules of justice and mercy. He will endeavour to stir up the heart against God, to renew our natural enmity against him. And if we attempt to fight him with his own weapons, if we begin to reason with him, more and more heaviness will, undoubtedly, ensue, if not utter darkness.

7. It has been frequently supposed, that there is another cause, (if not of darkness) at least, of heaviness; namely, God's withdrawing himself from the soul, because it is his sovereign will. Certainly, he will do this, if we grieve his Holy Spirit, either by outward or inward sin; either by doing evil or neglecting to do good; by giving way either to pride or anger, to spiritual sloth, to foolish desire, or inordinate affection. But that he ever withdraws himself because he will, merely because it is his good pleasure, I absolutely deny. There is no text, in all the Bible, which gives any colour for such a supposition. Nay, it is a supposition, contrary, not only to many particular texts, but to the whole tenor of Scripture. It is repugnant to the very nature of God: it is utterly beneath his majesty and wisdom, (as an eminent writer strongly expresses it) "to play at bo-peep with his creatures." It is inconsistent both with his justice and mercy, and with the sound experience of all his children.

8. One more cause of heaviness is mentioned by many of those who are termed Mystic authors. And the notion has crept in, I know not how, even among plain people, who have no acquaintance with them. I cannot better explain this, than in the words of a late writer, who relates this, as her own experience. "I continued so happy in my Beloved, that, although I should have been forced to live a vagabond in a desert, I should have found no difficulty in it. This state had not lasted long, when, in effect, I found myself led into a desert.—I found myself in a forlorn condition, altogether poor, wretched, and miserable.—The proper source of this grief is, the knowledge of ourselves, by which we find, that there is an extreme unlikeness between God and us. We see ourselves most opposite to Him, and that our inmost soul is entirely corrupted, depraved, and full of all kind of evil and malignity, of the world and the flesh, and all sorts of abominations." From hence it has been inferred, that the knowledge of ourselves, without which we should perish everlastingly, must, even after we have attained justifying faith, occasion the deepest heaviness.

9. But upon this I would observe, 1. In the preceding paragraph, this writer says, "Hearing I had not a true faith in Christ, I offered myself up to God, and immediately felt his love." It may be so; and yet it does not appear, that this was justification. It is more probable, it was no more than what are usually termed, the "drawings of the Father." And if so, the heaviness and darkness which followed, was no other than conviction of sin, which, in the nature

of things, must precede that faith whereby we are justified. 2. Suppose she was justified almost the same moment she was convinced of wanting faith, there was then no time for that gradually increasing of self-knowledge, which uses to precede justification: In this case, therefore, it came after, and was probably the more severe, the less it was expected. 3. It is allowed, there will be a far deeper, a far clearer and fuller knowledge of our inbred sin, of our total corruption by nature, after justification, than ever there was before it. But this need not occasion darkness of soul: I will not say, that it *must* bring us into heaviness. Were it so, the Apostle would not have used that expression, *if need be:* for there would be an absolute, indispensable need of it, for all that would know themselves: that is, in effect, for all that would know the perfect love of God, and thereby be "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." But this is by no means the case. On the contrary, God may increase the knowledge of ourselves to any degree, and increase, in the same proportion, the knowledge of himself and the experience of his love. And, in this case, there would be no "desert, no misery, no forlorn condition;" but love, and peace, and joy, gradually springing up into everlasting life.

IV. 1. For what ends then, (which was the Fourth thing to be considered) does God permit heaviness to befall so many of his children? The Apostle gives us a plain and direct answer to this important question: "That the trial of their faith, which is much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the Revelation of Jesus Christ," ver. 7. There may be an allusion to this, in that well-known passage of the fourth chapter, (although it primarily relates to quite another thing, as has been already observed:) "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, but rejoice that ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ: that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may likewise rejoice with exceeding great joy," ver. 12, &c.

2. Hence we learn, that the first and great end of God's permitting the temptations, which bring heaviness on his children, is the trial of their faith, which is tried by these, even as gold by the fire. Now we know, gold tried in the fire, is purified thereby, is separated from its dross. And so is faith in the fire of temptation; the more it is tried, the more it is purified. Yea, and not only purified, but also strengthened, confirmed, increased abundantly, by so many more proofs of the wisdom and power, the love and faithfulness of God. This, then, to increase our faith, is one gracious end of God's permitting those manifold temptations.

3. They serve to try, to purify, to confirm, and increase that living hope also, whereunto "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath begotten us again of his abundant mercy." Indeed, our hope cannot but increase, in the same proportion with our faith. On this foundation it stands: Believing in his name, living by faith in the Son of God, we hope for, we have a confident expectation of,

the glory which shall be revealed. And, consequently, whatever strengthens our faith, increases our hope also. At the same time it increases our joy in the Lord, which cannot but attend a hope full of immortality. In this view the Apostle exhorts believers in the other chapter; "Rejoice, that ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ." On this very account, "happy are you; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And hereby ye are enabled, even in the midst of sufferings, to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

4. They rejoice the more, because the trials, which increase their faith and hope, increase their love also: both their gratitude to God for all his mercies, and their good will to all mankind. Accordingly, the more deeply sensible they are of the loving-kindness of God their Saviour, the more is their heart inflamed with love to him "who first loved us." The clearer and stronger evidence they have of the glory that shall be revealed, the more do they love him who hath purchased it for them, and "given them the earnest" thereof "in their hearts." And this, the increase of their love, is another end of the temptations permitted to come upon them.

5. Yet another is, their advance in holiness; holiness of heart, and holiness of conversation:—the latter naturally resulting from the former; for a good tree will bring forth good fruit. And all inward holiness is the immediate fruit of the faith that worketh by love. By this the blessed Spirit purifies the heart from pride, self-will, passion; from love of the world, from foolish and hurtful desires, from vile and vain affections. Beside that, sanctified afflictions have, through the grace of God, an immediate and direct tendency to holiness. Through the operation of his Spirit, they humble more and more, and abase the soul before God. They calm and meeken our turbulent spirit, tame the fierceness of our nature, soften our obstinacy and self-will, crucify us to the world, and bring us to expect all our strength from, and to seek all our happiness in God.

6. And all these terminate in that great end, that our faith, hope, love, and holiness, *may be found* (if it doth not yet appear) *unto praise* from God himself, *and honour* from men and angels, *and glory* assigned by the great judge, to all that have endured to the end. And this will be assigned in that awful day to every man "according to his works," according to the work which God had wrought in his heart, and the outward works which he has wrought for God: and, likewise, according to what he had suffered; so that all these trials are unspeakable gain. So many ways do these "light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

7. Add to this, the advantage which others may receive, by seeing our behaviour under affliction. We find by experience, example frequently makes a deeper impression upon us than precept. And what examples have a stronger influence, not only on those who are partakers of like precious faith, but even on them who have not known God, than that of a soul calm and serene in the midst of

storms; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; meekly accepting whatever is the will of God, however grievous it may be to nature; saying, in sickness and pain, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" In loss or want, "The Lord gave: the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the Name of the Lord!"

V. 1. I am to conclude with some inferences. And, First, how wide is the difference between *darkness* of soul, and *heaviness!* Which, nevertheless, are so generally confounded with each other, even by experienced Christians! Darkness, or the wilderness-state, implies a total loss of joy in the Holy Ghost: heaviness, does not; in the midst of this we may "rejoice with joy unspeakable." They that are in darkness, have lost the peace of God; they that are in heaviness have not: so far from it, that at the very time *peace* as well as *grace* may *be multiplied unto* them. In the former, the love of God is waxed cold, if it be not utterly extinguished: in the latter it retains its full force, or, rather, increases daily. In those, faith itself, if not totally lost, is, however, grievously decayed. Their evidence and conviction of things not seen, particularly of the pardoning love of God, is not so clear or strong as in time past: and their trust in him is proportionably weakened. These, though they see him not, yet have a clear, unshaken confidence in God, and an abiding evidence of that love, whereby all their sins are blotted out. So that, as long as we can distinguish faith from unbelief, hope from despair, peace from war, the love of God from the love of the world, we may infallibly distinguish *heaviness* from *darkness*.

2. We may learn from hence, Secondly, that there may be need of *heaviness*, but there can be no need of *darkness*. There may be need of our being in *heaviness for a season*, in order to the ends above recited: at least, in this sense, as it is a natural result of those *manifold temptations*, which are needful to try and increase our faith, to confirm and enlarge our hope, to purify our hearts from all unholy tempers, and to perfect us in love. And, by consequence, they are needful, in order to brighten our crown, and add to our eternal weight of glory. But we cannot say, that darkness is needful, in order to any of these ends. It is no way conducive to them: the loss of faith, hope, love, is surely neither conducive to holiness, nor to the increase of that reward in heaven, which will be in proportion to our holiness on earth.

3. From the Apostle's manner of speaking we may gather, Thirdly, that even heaviness is not *always* needful. "Now, for a season, if need be:" so it is not needful for *all persons;* nor for any person at *all times*. God is able, he has both power and wisdom, to work, when he pleases, the same work of grace in any soul, by other means. And, in some instances, he does so: he causes those, whom it pleaseth him, to go on from strength to strength, even till they *perfect holiness in* his *fear*, with scarce any heaviness at all: as having an absolute power over the heart of man, and moving all the springs of it at his pleasure. But these cases are rare: God gene-

rally sees good to try "acceptable men in the furnace of affliction." So that manifold temptations and heaviness, more or less, are usually the portion of his dearest children.

4. We ought, therefore, Lastly, to watch and pray, and use our utmost endeavours to avoid falling into darkness. But we need not be solicitous how to avoid, so much as how to improve by heaviness. Our great care should be, so to behave ourselves under it, so to wait upon the Lord therein, that it may fully answer all the design of his love, in permitting it to come upon us: that it may be a mean of increasing our faith, of confirming our hope, of perfecting us in all holiness. Whenever it comes, let us have an eye to these gracious ends for which it is permitted, and use all diligence, that we may not "make void the counsel of God against ourselves." Let us earnestly *work together with him*, by the grace which he is continually giving us, in "purifying ourselves from all pollution, both of flesh and spirit," and daily "growing in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," till we are received into his everlasting kingdom!

SERMON LI.

ON SELF-DENIAL.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—LUKE ix. 23.

1. IT has been frequently imagined, that the direction here given, related chiefly, if not wholly, to the apostles; at least, to the Christians of the first ages, or those in a state of persecution. But this is a grievous mistake; for, although our blessed Lord is here directing his discourse more immediately to his Apostles, and those other disciples, who attended him in the days of his flesh; yet, in them he speaks to us, and to all mankind, without any exception or limitation. The very reason of the thing puts it beyond dispute, that the duty, which is here enjoined, is not peculiar to them, or to the Christians of the early ages. It no more regards any particular order of men, or particular time, than any particular country. No: it is of the most universal nature, respecting all times, and all persons: yea, and all things: not meats and drinks only, and things pertaining to the senses. The meaning is, *If any man*, of whatever rank, station, circumstances, in any nation, in any age of the world, *will* effectually come after me, "let him deny himself" in all things; let him "take up his cross," of whatever kind, yea, and that "daily, and follow me."

2. The *denying* ourselves, and the *taking up our cross*, in the full extent of the expression, is not a thing of small concern: It is not expedient only, as are some of the circumstantials of religion, but it is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming, or continuing *his disciples*. It is absolutely necessary, in the very nature of the thing, to our *coming after him* and *following him*. Insomuch, that, as far as we do not practise it, we are not *his disciples*. If we do not continually *deny ourselves*, we do not learn of him, but of other masters. If we do not *take up our cross daily*, we do not *come after him*, but after the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following him, we are not treading in his steps, but going back from, or, at least, wide of him.

3. It is for this reason, that so many ministers of Christ, in almost every age and nation, particularly since the Reformation of the Church from the innovations and corruptions which had gradually crept into it, have written and spoken so largely on this important duty, both in their public discourses, and private exhortations. This induced them to disperse abroad many tracts upon the subject: and some in our own nation. They knew both from the oracles of God, and from the testimony of their own experience, how impossible it is not to deny our Master, unless we will deny ourselves: and how vainly we attempt to follow him that was crucified, unless we take up our own cross daily.

4. But may not this very consideration make it reasonable to inquire, if so much has been said and written on the subject already, what need is there to say or write any more? I answer, There are considerable numbers, even of people fearing God, who have not had the opportunity either of hearing what has been spoken, or reading what has been written upon it. And, perhaps, if they had read much of what has been written, they would not have been much profited. Many who have written, (some of them large volumes,) do by no means appear to have understood the subject. Either they had imperfect views of the very nature of it, (and then they could never explain it to others,) or they were unacquainted with the due extent of it; they did not see how exceeding broad this command is; or they were not sensible of the absolute, the indispensable necessity of it. Others speak of it in so dark, so perplexed, so intricate, so mystical a manner, as if they designed, rather to conceal it from the vulgar, than to explain it to common readers. Others speak admirably well, with great clearness and strength, on the necessity of self-denial; but, then, they deal in generals only, without coming to particular instances, and so are of little use to the bulk of mankind, to men of ordinary capacity and education. And, if some of them do descend to particulars, it is to those particulars only, which do not affect the generality of men: since they seldom, if ever, occur in common life; such as the enduring imprisonment or tortures: the giving up, in a literal sense, their houses or lands, their husbands or wives, children,

or life itself: to none of which we are called, nor are likely to be, unless God should permit times of public persecution to return. In the meantime, I know of no writer in the English tongue, who has described the nature of self-denial in plain and intelligible terms, such as lie level with common understandings, and applied it to those little particulars which daily occur in common life. A discourse of this kind is wanted still: and it is wanted the more, because in every stage of the spiritual life, although there is a variety of particular hinderances, of our attaining grace or growing therein, yet are they all resolvable into these general ones,—either we do not deny ourselves, or we do not take up our cross.

In order to supply this defect in some degree, I shall endeavour to show, First, What it is for a man to deny himself, and what to take up his cross: and, Secondly, That if a man be not fully Christ's disciple, it is always owing to the want of this.

I. 1. I shall, First, endeavour to show, What it is for a man to "deny himself, and take up his cross daily." This is a point, which is, of all others, most necessary to be considered and thoroughly understood, even on this account, that it is, of all others, most opposed by numerous and powerful enemies. All our nature must certainly rise up against this, even in its own defence: the world, consequently, the men who take nature, not grace, for their guide, abhor the very sound of it. And the great enemy of our souls, well knowing its importance, cannot but move every stone against it. But this is not all; even those, who have in some measure shaken off the yoke of the devil, who have experienced, especially of late years, a real work of grace in their hearts, yet are no friends to this grand doctrine of Christianity, though it is so peculiarly insisted on by their Master. Some of them are as deeply and totally ignorant concerning it, as if there were not one word about it in the Bible. Others are farther off still, having unawares imbibed strong prejudices against it. These they have received partly from outside Christians; men of a fair speech and behaviour, who want nothing of godliness, but the power; nothing of religion, but the spirit: and partly from those who did once, if they do not now, "taste the powers of the world to come." But are there any of these, who do not both practise self-denial themselves, and recommend it to others? You are little acquainted with mankind, if you doubt of this. There are whole bodies of men, who only do not declare war against it. To go no further than London; Look upon the whole body of Predestinarians, who, by the free mercy of God, have lately been called out of the darkness of nature, into the light of faith. Are they patterns of self-denial? How few of them even profess to practise it at all! How few recommend it themselves, or are pleased with them that do? Rather, do they not continually represent it in the most odious colours, as if it were seeking "salvation by works," or "seeking to establish our own righteousness?" And how readily do Antinomians of all kinds, from the smooth Moravian, to the boisterous, foul-mouthed Ranter, join the cry, with their silly, unmeaning cant of *legality*, and *preaching the law!* Therefore, you

are in constant danger of being wheedled, hectored, or ridiculed out of this important gospel-doctrine, either by false teachers, or false brethren, (more or less beguiled from the simplicity of the gospel,) if you are not deeply grounded therein. Let fervent prayer then go before, accompany, and follow, what you are now about to read, that it may be written in your heart by the finger of God, so as never to be erased.

2. But what is self-denial? Wherein are we to deny ourselves? And whence does the necessity of this arise? I answer, The will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature; equally binding every angel in heaven, and every man upon earth. Nor can it be otherwise: This is the natural, the necessary result of the relation between creatures and their Creator. But if the will of God be our one rule of action, in every thing, great and small, it follows, by undeniable consequence, that we are not to do our own will in any thing. Here, therefore, we see at once the nature, with the ground, and reason of self-denial. We see the nature of self-denial: It is the denying or refusing to follow our own will, from a conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action to us. And we see the reason thereof, because we are creatures: because "it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

3. This reason for self-denial must hold, even with regard to the angels of God in heaven; and with regard to man, innocent and holy, as he came out of the hands of his Creator. But a farther reason for it arises from the condition wherein all men are since the fall. We are all now "shapen in wickedness, and in sin did our mother conceive us." Our nature is altogether corrupt, in every power and faculty. And our will, depraved equally with the rest, is wholly bent to indulge our natural corruption. On the other hand, it is the will of God, that we resist and counteract that corruption, not at some times, or in some things only, but at all times, and in all things. Here, therefore, is a farther ground for constant and universal self-denial.

4. To illustrate this a little farther. The will of God is a path leading straight to God. The will of man, which once ran parallel with it, is now another path, not only different from it, but, in our present state, directly contrary to it: it leads from God. If, therefore, we walk in the one, we must necessarily quit the other. We cannot walk in both. Indeed, a man *of faint heart and feeble hands*, may *go in two ways*, one after the other. But he cannot walk in two ways at the same time: he cannot, at one and the same time, follow his own will, and follow the will of God: He must choose the one, or the other: denying God's will, to follow his own: or denying himself, to follow the will of God.

5. Now, it is undoubtedly pleasing, for the time, to follow our own will, by indulging, in any instance that offers, the corruption of our nature. But, by following it in any thing, we so far strengthen the perverseness of our will: and, by indulging it, we continually increase the corruption of our nature. So, by the food, which is agreeable to the palate, we often increase a bodily disease: it gratifies the taste,

but it inflames the disorder: it brings pleasure, but it also brings death.

6. On the whole, then, to deny ourselves, is, to deny our own will, where it does not fall in with the will of God, and that however pleasing it may be. It is, to deny ourselves any pleasure which does not spring from, and lead to God; That is, in effect, to refuse going out of our way, though into a pleasant, flowery path: to refuse what we know to be deadly poison, though agreeable to the taste.

7. And every one, that would follow Christ, that would be his real disciple, must not only *deny himself*, but *take up his cross* also. A cross is, any thing contrary to our will, any thing displeasing to our nature. So that taking up our cross goes a little farther than denying ourselves; it rises a little higher, and is a more difficult task to flesh and blood: it being more easy to forego pleasure, than to endure pain.

8. Now in "running the race that is set before us," according to the will of God, there is often a cross lying in the way; that is, something which is not only not joyous, but grievous, something which is contrary to our will, which is displeasing to our nature. What then is to be done? The choice is plain: either we must *take up our cross*, or we must turn aside from the way of God, "from the holy commandment delivered to us;" if we do not stop altogether, or turn back to everlasting perdition.

9. In order to the healing of that corruption, that evil disease, which every man brings with him into the world, it is often needful to pluck out, as it were, a right eye, to cut off a right hand; so painful is either the thing itself, which must be done, or the only means of doing it: the parting, suppose, with a foolish desire, with an inordinate affection: or a separation from the object of it, without which, it can never be extinguished. In the former kind, the tearing away such a desire or affection, when it is deeply rooted in the soul, is often like the piercing of a sword, yea, like "the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, the joints and marrow." The Lord then *sits upon the* soul *as a refiner's fire*, to burn up all the dross thereof. And this is a cross indeed; it is essentially painful; it must be so, in the very nature of the thing. The soul cannot be thus torn asunder, it cannot pass through the fire without pain.

10. In the latter kind, the means to heal a sin-sick soul, to cure a foolish desire, an inordinate affection, are often painful, not in the nature of the thing, but from the nature of the disease. So when our Lord said to the rich young man, "Go, sell that thou hast, and give it to the poor," (as well knowing, this was the only mean of healing his covetousness,) the very thought of it gave him so much pain, that "he went away sorrowful;" choosing rather to part with his hope of heaven, than his possessions on earth. This was a burden he could not consent to lift, a cross he would not take up. And in the one kind or the other, every follower of Christ will surely have need to "take up his cross daily."

11. The *taking up* differs a little from *bearing his cross*. We are

then properly said to *bear our cross*, when we endure what is laid upon us without our choice, with meekness and resignation. Whereas, we do not properly *take up our cross*, but when we voluntarily suffer what is in our power to avoid: when we willingly embrace the will of God, though contrary to our own: when we choose what is painful, because it is the will of our wise and gracious Creator.

12. And thus it behooves every disciple of Christ to *take up*, as well as to *bear*, his cross. Indeed, in one sense, it is not *his* alone: it is common to him, and many others: seeing "there is no temptation befalls any man," ει μη ανθρωπινος· "but such as is common to men," such as is incident and adapted to their common nature and situation in the present world. But, in another sense, as it is considered with all its circumstances, it is his; peculiar to himself: it is prepared of God for him: it is given by God to him, as a token of his love. And if he receive it as such, and, after using such means to remove the pressure, as Christian wisdom directs, lies as clay in the potter's hand; it is disposed and ordered by God for his good, both with regard to the quality of it, and, in respect to its quantity and degree, its duration and every other circumstance.

13. In all this, we may easily conceive our blessed Lord to act as the physician of our souls, not merely "for his own pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness." If, in searching our wounds, he puts us to pain, it is only in order to heal them. He cuts away what is putrefied or unsound, in order to preserve the sound part. And if we freely choose the loss of a limb, rather than that the whole body should perish, how much more should we choose, figuratively, to cut off a right hand, rather than that the whole soul should be cast into hell!

14. We see plainly then both the nature and ground of *taking up our cross*. It does not imply the *disciplining ourselves*, (as some speak) the literally tearing our own flesh; the wearing hair-cloth, or iron girdles, or any thing else that would impair our bodily health: (although we know not what allowance God may make for those who act thus through involuntary ignorance;) but the embracing the will of God, though contrary to our own; the choosing wholesome, though bitter medicines; the freely accepting temporary pain, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, when it is either essentially or accidentally necessary to eternal pleasure.

II. 1. I am, Secondly, to show, that it is always owing to the want of self-denial, or taking up his cross, that any man does not thoroughly follow him, is not fully a disciple of Christ.

It is true, this may be partly owing, in some cases, to the want of the means of grace; of hearing the true word of God spoken with power; of the sacraments, or of Christian fellowship. But where none of these is wanting, the great hinderance of our receiving, or growing in the grace of God, is always the want of denying ourselves, or taking up our cross.

2. A few instances will make this plain. A man hears the word

which is able to save his soul. He is well pleased with what he hears, acknowledges the truth, and is a little affected by it. Yet he remains "dead in trespasses and sins," senseless and unawakened. Why is this? Because he will not part with his bosom sin, though he knows it is an abomination to the Lord. He came to hear, full of lust and unholy desire; and he will not part with them. Therefore, no deep impression is made upon him, but his foolish heart is still hardened: that is, he is still senseless and unawakened, because he will not *deny himself.*

3. Suppose he begins to awake out of sleep, and his eyes are a little opened, why are they so quickly closed again? Why does he again sink into the deep sleep of death? Because he again yields to his bosom-sin; he drinks again of the pleasing poison. Therefore, it is impossible that any lasting impression should be made upon his heart. That is, he relapses into his fatal insensibility, because he will not *deny himself.*

4. But this is not the case with all. We have many instances of those, who, when once awakened, sleep no more. The impressions, once received, do not wear away: they are not only deep, but lasting. And yet, many of these have not found what they seek: they mourn and yet are not comforted. Now, why is this? It is because they do not "bring forth fruits meet for repentance:" because they do not, according to the grace they have received, "cease from evil, and do good." They do not cease from the easily besetting sin, the sin of their constitution, of their education, or of their profession. Or they omit doing the good they may, and know they ought to do, because of some disagreeable circumstance attending it: that is, they do not attain faith, because they will not "deny themselves," or "take up their cross."

5. But this man did receive "the heavenly gift." He did "taste of the powers of the world to come." He saw "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." The "peace which passeth all understanding," did "rule his heart and mind; and the love of God was shed abroad therein by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him." Yet he is now weak as another man. He again relishes the things of earth, and has more taste for the things which are seen, than for those which are not seen. The eye of his understanding is closed again, so that he cannot "see him that is invisible." His love is waxed cold, and the peace of God no longer rules in his heart. And no marvel; for he has again given place to the devil, and grieved the Holy Spirit of God. He has turned again unto folly, to some pleasing sin, if not in outward act, yet in heart. He has given place to pride, or anger, or desire, to self-will, or stubbornness. Or he did not stir up the gift of God which was in him; he gave way to spiritual sloth, and would not be at the pains of "praying always, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." That is, he made shipwreck of the faith, for want of self-denial, and "taking up his cross daily."

6. But perhaps he has not made shipwreck of the faith: he has

still a measure of the Spirit of adoption, which continues to witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. However he is not "going on to perfection:" he is not as one hungering and thirsting after righteousness, panting after the whole image and full enjoyment of God, as the hart after the water-brook. Rather he is weary and faint in his mind, and, as it were, hovering between life and death. And why is he thus, but because he hath forgotten the word of God, "By works is faith made perfect?" He does not use all diligence, in working the works of God. He does not "continue instant in prayer," private as well as public; in communicating, hearing, meditation, fasting, and religious conference. If he does not wholly neglect some of these means, at least he does not use them all, with his might. Or he is not zealous of works of charity, as well as works of piety. He is not merciful after his power, with the full ability which God giveth. He does not fervently serve the Lord, by doing good to men, in every kind, and in every degree he can, to their souls as well as their bodies. And why does he not continue in prayer? Because in times of dryness it is pain and grief unto him. He does not continue in hearing at all opportunities, because sleep is sweet; or it is cold, or dark, or rainy. But why does he not continue in works of mercy? Because he cannot feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, unless he retrench the expense of his own apparel, or use cheaper and less pleasing food. Beside which, the visiting the sick, or those that are in prison, is attended with many disagreeable circumstances. And so are most works of spiritual mercy: reproof, in particular. He *would* reprove his neighbour; but sometimes shame, sometimes fear comes between. For he may expose himself, not only to ridicule, but to heavier inconveniences too. Upon these and the like considerations, he omits one or more, if not all works of mercy and piety. Therefore, his faith is not made perfect, neither can he grow in grace: namely, because he will not "deny himself, and take up his daily cross."

7. It manifestly follows, That it is always owing to the want either of self-denial or taking up his cross, that a man does not thoroughly follow his Lord, that he is not fully a disciple of Christ. It is owing to this, that he, who is dead in sin does not awake, though the trumpet be blown; that he, who begins to awake out of sleep, yet has no deep or lasting conviction: that he, who is deeply and lastingly convinced of sin, does not obtain remission of sins; that some, who have received this heavenly gift, retain it not, but make shipwreck of the faith: and that others, if they do not draw back to perdition, yet are weary and faint in their minds, and do not reach the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

III. 1. How easily may we learn from hence, that they know neither the Scripture nor the power of God, who directly or indirectly, in public or in private, oppose the doctrine of self-denial and the daily cross. How totally ignorant are these men, of an hundred particular texts, as well as of the general tenor of the whole Oracles of

God? And how entirely unacquainted must they be, with true, genuine Christian experience: Of the manner wherein the Holy Spirit ever did, and does at this day work in the souls of men! They may talk indeed very loudly and confidently, (a natural fruit of ignorance,) as though they were the only men who understood either the word of God, or the experience of his children. But their words are, in every sense, *vain words:* they are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

2. We may learn from hence, Secondly, the real cause why not only many particular persons, but even bodies of men, who were once burning and shining lights, have now lost both their light and heat. If they did not hate and oppose, they, at least, lightly esteemed this precious gospel doctrine. If they did not boldly say, *Abnegationem omnem proculcamus, internecioni damus;* "We trample all self-denial under foot, we devote it to destruction:" yet they neither valued it according to its high importance, nor took any pains in practising it. *Hanc mystici docent*, said that great, bad man, "*The mystic writers teach self-denial.*"—No; the inspired writers. And God teaches it to every soul, who is willing to hear his voice.

3. We may learn from hence, Thirdly, that it is not enough for a minister of the gospel, not to oppose the doctrine of self-denial, to say nothing concerning it. Nay, he cannot satisfy his duty, by saying a little in favour of it. If he would indeed be pure from the blood of all men, he must speak of it frequently and largely; he must inculcate the necessity of it, in the clearest and strongest manner; he must press it with his might, on all persons, at all times, and in all places: laying "line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept." So shall he have a conscience void of offence: so shall he save his own soul and those that hear him.

4. Lastly: See that you apply this, every one of you, to your own souls. Meditate upon it when you are in secret: ponder it in your hearts. Take care not only to understand it thoroughly, but to remember it to your life's end. Cry unto the strong for strength, that you may no sooner understand, than enter upon the practice of it. Delay not the time, but practise it immediately, from this very hour: Practise it universally, on every one of the thousand occasions, which will occur in all circumstances of life: Practise it daily, without intermission, from the hour you first set your hand to the plough, and perseveringly enduring therein to the end, till your spirit returns to God.

SERMON LII.

THE CURE OF EVIL-SPEAKING.

"*If thy Brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy Brother.*

"*But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established.*

"*And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church: but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.*"—MATTHEW xviii. 15—17.

1. "SPEAK evil of no man," says the great Apostle: as plain a command as "Thou shalt do no murder." But who, even among Christians, regards this command? Yea, how few are there, that so much as understand it? What is *evil-speaking?* It is not, as some suppose, the same with lying or slandering. All a man says may be as true as the Bible: and yet the saying of it is evil-speaking. For evil-speaking is neither more nor less than speaking evil of an absent person, relating something evil, which was really done or said by one that is not present when it is related. Suppose, having seen a man drunk, or heard him curse or swear, I tell this when he is absent; it is evil-speaking. In our language, this is also by an extremely proper name, termed BACKBITING. Nor is there any material difference between this and what we usually style TALEBEARING. If the tale be delivered in a soft quiet manner, (perhaps with expressions of good-will to the person, and of hope, that things may not be quite so bad,) then we call it WHISPERING. But in whatever manner it be done, the thing is the same; the same in substance if not in circumstance. Still it is evil-speaking; still this command, "Speak evil of no man," is trampled under foot, if we relate to another the fault of a third person, when he is not present to answer for himself.

2. And how extremely common is this sin, among all orders and degrees of men! How do high and low, rich and poor, wise and foolish, learned and unlearned, run into it continually! Persons, who differ from each other in all things else, nevertheless agree in this. How few are there, that can testify before God, "I am clear in this matter: I have always set a watch before my mouth, and kept the door of my lips?" What conversation do you hear of any considerable length, whereof evil-speaking is not one ingredient?

And that even among persons, who in the general, have the fear of God before their eyes, and do really desire to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man.

3. And the very commonness of this sin makes it difficult to be avoided. As we are encompassed with it on every side, so, if we are not deeply sensible of the danger, and continually guarding against it, we are liable to be carried away by the torrent. In this instance, almost the whole of mankind is, as it were, in a conspiracy against us. And their example steals upon us we know not how; so that we insensibly slide into the imitation of it. Besides, it is recommended from within, as well as from without. There is scarce any wrong temper in the mind of man, which may not be occasionally gratified by it, and consequently incline us to it. It gratifies our pride, to relate those faults of others whereof we think ourselves not to be guilty. Anger, resentment, and all unkind tempers are indulged, by speaking against those with whom we are displeased. And in many cases, by reciting the sins of their neighbours, men indulge their own foolish and hurtful desires.

4. Evil-speaking is the more difficult to be avoided, because it frequently attacks us in disguise. We speak thus, out of a noble, generous, (it is well, if we do not say,) holy indignation against these vile creatures! We commit sin from mere hatred of sin! We serve the devil out of pure zeal for God. It is merely in order to punish the wicked that we run into this wickedness. "So do the passions" (as one speaks) "all justify themselves," and palm sin upon us, under the veil of holiness.

5. But is there no way to avoid the snare? Unquestionably there is. Our blessed Lord has marked out a plain way for his followers, in the words above recited. None who warily and steadily walk in this path, will ever fall into evil-speaking. This rule is either an infallible preventive, or a certain cure of it. In the preceding verses, our Lord had said, "Wo to the world because of offences." Unspeakable misery will arise in the world, from this baleful fountain. (*Offences* are all things whereby any one is turned out of, or hindered in the ways of God.) "For it must be that offences come." Such is the nature of things: such the weakness, folly, and wickedness of mankind. "But wo to the man," miserable is that man, "by whom the offence cometh.—Wherefore, if thy hand, thy foot, thy eye, cause thee to offend:" if the most dear enjoyment, the most beloved and useful person, turn thee out of, or hinder thee in the way, "pluck it out, cut them off, and cast them from thee." But how can we avoid giving offence to some, and being offended at others? Especially, suppose they are quite in the wrong, and we see it with our own eyes? Our Lord here teaches us how: He lays down a sure method of avoiding offences, and evil-speaking together. "If thy brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone: if he will hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee

one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church ; but if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican."

I. 1. First, "If thy brother shall sin against thee, go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone." The most literal way of following this first rule, where it is practicable, is the best. Therefore, if thou seest with thine own eyes a brother, a fellow-Christian, commit undeniable sin, or hearest it with thine own ears, so that it is impossible for thee to doubt the fact, then thy part is plain. Take the very first opportunity of going to him ; and if thou canst have access, "tell him of his fault between thee and him alone." Indeed great care is to be taken that this be done in a right spirit, and in a right manner——The success of a reproof greatly depends on the spirit wherein it is given. Be not, therefore, wanting in earnest prayer to God, that it may be given in a lowly spirit : with a deep, piercing conviction, that it is God alone who maketh thee to differ, and that if any good be done by what is now spoken, God doth it himself. Pray that he would guard thy heart, enlighten thy mind, and direct thy tongue to such words as he may please to bless. See that thou speak in a meek as well as a lowly spirit : for the "wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." If he be "overtaken in a fault," he can no otherwise be restored than "in the spirit of meekness." If he opposes the truth, yet he cannot be brought to the knowledge thereof, but by gentleness. Still speak in a spirit of tender love, "which many waters cannot quench." If love be not conquered, it conquers all things. Who can tell the force of love ?

> Love can bow down the stubborn neck,
> The stone to flesh convert ;
> Soften, and melt, and pierce, and break
> An adamantine heart.

Confirm then your love toward him, and you will thereby "heap coals of fire upon his head"

2. But see that the manner also wherein you speak, be according to the gospel of Christ. Avoid every thing in look, gesture, word, and tone of voice, that savours of pride or self-sufficiency. Studiously avoid every thing magisterial or dogmatical, every thing that looks like arrogance or assuming. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt. With equal care avoid all appearance of anger, and though you use great plainness of speech, yet let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of any warmth, but that of love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill-will, no bitterness or sourness of expression ; but use the air and language of sweetness as well as gentleness, that all may appear to flow from love in the heart. And yet this sweetness need not hinder your speaking in the most serious and solemn manner : as far as may be, in the very words of the Oracles of God, (for there are none like them) and as under the eye of him who is coming to judge the quick and dead.

3. If you have not an opportunity of speaking to him in person, or cannot have access, you may do it by a messenger; by a common friend, in whose prudence, as well as uprightness, you can thoroughly confide. Such a person, speaking in your name, and in the spirit and manner above described, may answer the same end, and, in a good degree, supply your lack of service. Only beware you do not feign the want of opportunity, in order to shun the cross: neither take it for granted, that you cannot have access, without ever making the trial. Whenever you can speak in your own person, it is far better. But you should rather do it by another, than not at all: this way is better than none.

4. But, what if you can neither speak yourself, nor find such a messenger as you can confide in. If this be really the case, it then only remains, to write. And there may be some circumstances which make this the most advisable way of speaking. One of these circumstances is, when the person with whom we have to do, is of so warm and impetuous a temper, as does not easily bear reproof, especially from an equal or inferior. But it may be so introduced and softened in writing, as to make it far more tolerable. Besides, many will read the very same words, which they could not bear to hear. It does not give so violent a shock to their pride, nor so sensibly touch their honour. And suppose it makes little impression at first, they will, perhaps, give it a second reading, and, upon farther consideration, lay to heart, what before they disregarded. If you add your name, this is nearly the same thing as going to him, and speaking in person. And this should always be done, unless it be rendered improper by some very particular reason.

5. It should be well observed, not only that this is a step which our Lord absolutely commands us to take, but that he commands us to take this step first, before we attempt any other. No alternative is allowed, no choice of any thing else: This is the way: walk thou in it. It is true, he enjoins us, if need require, to take two other steps. But they are to be taken successively after this step, and neither of them before it. Much less are we to take any other step, either before, or beside this. To do any thing else, or not to do this, is, therefore, equally inexcusable.

6. Do not think to excuse yourself for taking an entirely different step, by saying, "Why, I did not speak to any one, till I was so burdened, that I could not refrain." You were burdened! It was no wonder you should; unless your conscience was seared: for you were under the guilt of sin, of disobeying a plain commandment of God. You ought immediately to have gone and "told your brother of his fault between you and him alone." If you did not, how should you be otherwise than burdened, (unless your heart was utterly hardened,) while you were trampling the command of God under foot, and "hating your brother in your heart?" And what a way have you found to unburden yourself? God reproves you for a sin of omission, for not telling your brother of his fault: and you comfort yourself under his reproof, by a sin of commission, by telling

your brother's fault to another person! Ease bought by sin is a dear purchase: I trust in God you will have no ease, but will be burdened so much the more, till you "go to your brother, and tell him," and no one else.

7. I know but of one exception to this rule. There may be a peculiar case, wherein it is necessary to accuse the guilty, though absent, in order to preserve the innocent. For instance: You are acquainted with the design which a man has against the life or property of his neighbour. Now, the case may be so circumstanced, that there is no other way of hindering that design from taking effect, but the making it known, without delay, to him against whom it is laid. In this case, therefore, this rule is set aside, as is that of the Apostle; "speak evil of no man:" and it is lawful, yea, it is our bounden duty to speak evil of an absent person, in order to prevent his doing evil to others and himself at the same time. But remember, meanwhile, that all evil-speaking is, in its own nature, deadly poison. Therefore, if you are sometimes constrained to use it as a medicine, yet use it with fear and trembling: seeing it is so dangerous a medicine, that nothing but absolute necessity can excuse your using it at all. Accordingly, use it as seldom as possible; never but when there is such a necessity; and even then use as little of it as is possible; only so much as is necessary for the end proposed. At all other times, "go and tell him of his fault, between thee and him alone."

II. 1. But what "if he will not hear?" If he repay evil for good? If he be enraged rather than convinced? What, if he hear to no purpose, and go on still in the evil of his way? We must expect this will frequently be the case; the mildest and tenderest reproof will have no effect, but the blessing we wished for another, will return into our own bosom. And what are we to do then? Our Lord has given us a clear and full direction. Then "take with thee one or two more:" This is the second step. Take one or two whom you know to be of a loving spirit, lovers of God, and of their neighbour. See, likewise, that they be of a lowly spirit, and clothed with humility." Let them also be such as are meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering; not apt to "return evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." Let them be men of understanding, such as are endued with wisdom from above; and men unbiassed, free from partiality, free from prejudice of any kind. Care should likewise be taken, that both the persons and their characters be well known to him. And let those that are acceptable to him be chosen preferable to any others.

2. Love will dictate the manner wherein they should proceed, according to the nature of the case. Nor can any one particular manner be prescribed for all cases. But, perhaps, in general, one might advise, before they enter upon the thing itself, let them mildly and affectionately declare that they have no anger or prejudice toward him, and that it is merely from a principle of good-will, that they now come, or at all concern themselves with his affairs. To make this the more apparent, they might then calmly attend to your repetition of your

former conversation with him, and to what he then said in his own defence, before they attempted to determine any thing. After this they would be better able to judge in what manner to proceed, "that, by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word might be established:" That whatever you have said, may have its full force, by the additional weight of their authority.

3. In order to this, may they not, 1. Briefly repeat what you spoke, and what he answered? 2. Enlarge upon, open, and confirm the reasons which you had given? 3. Give weight to your reproof, showing how just, how kind, and how seasonable it was? And, Lastly, Enforce the advices and persuasions which you had annexed to it? And these may likewise hereafter, if need should require, bear witness of what was spoken.

4. With regard to this, as well as the preceding rule, we may observe, that our Lord gives us no choice, leaves us no alternative, but expressly commands us to do this, and nothing else in the place of it. He likewise directs us when to do this. Neither sooner nor later. Namely, *after* we have taken the first, and *before* we have taken the third step. It is then, only, that we are authorized to relate the evil another has done, to those whom we desire to bear a part with us, in this great instance of brotherly love. But let us have a care how we relate it to any other person, till both these steps have been taken. If we neglect to take these, or if we take any others, what wonder if we are burdened still? For we are sinners against God, and against our neighbour. And, how fairly soever we may colour it, yet, if we have any conscience, our sin will find us out, and bring a burden upon our soul.

III. 1. That we may be thoroughly instructed in this weighty affair, our Lord has given us a still farther direction. "If he will not hear them," then, and not till then, "tell it to the Church." This is the third step. All the question is, How this word, "the Church," is here to be understood? But the very nature of the thing will determine this, beyond all reasonable doubt. You cannot tell it to the national Church, the whole body of men termed "the Church of England." Neither would it answer any Christian end, if you could: this, therefore, is not the meaning of the word. Neither can you tell it to that whole body of people in England, with whom you have a more immediate connexion. Nor, indeed, would this answer any good end: the word, therefore, is not to be understood thus. It would not answer any valuable end, to tell the faults of every particular member to the Church, (if you would so term it,) the congregation or society united together in London. It remains that you tell it to the elder, or elders of the Church, to those who are overseers of that flock of Christ, to which you both belong, who watch over yours and his soul, "as they that must give account." And this should be done, if it conveniently can, in the presence of the person concerned, and, though plainly, yet with all the tenderness and love, which the nature of the thing will admit. It properly belongs to their office, to determine concerning the behaviour of those

under their care, and to rebuke according to the demerit of the offence, *with all authority*. When, therefore, you have done this, you have done all which the word of God, or the law of love, requireth of you. You are not now partaker of his sin, but, if he perish, his blood is on his own head.

2. Here, also, let it be observed, that this, and no other, is the third step which we are to take; and that we are to take it in its order, after the other two; not before the second, much less the first; unless in some very particular circumstance. Indeed, in one case, the second step may coincide with this: they may be, in a manner, one and the same. The elder or elders of the Church, may be so connected with the offended brother, that they may set aside the necessity, and supply the place of the *one or two* witnesses; so that it may suffice to tell it to them, after you have told it to your brother, "between you and him alone."

3. When you have done this, you have delivered your own soul. "If he will not hear the church," if he persist in his sin, "let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." You are under no obligation to think of him any more: only when you commend him to God in prayer. You need not speak of him any more, but leave him to his own Master. Indeed, you still owe to him, as to all other heathens, earnest, tender good-will. You owe him courtesy, and, as occasion offers, all the offices of humanity. But have no friendship, no familiarity with him; no other intercourse than with an open heathen.

4. But if this be the rule by which Christians walk, which is the land where the Christians live? A few you may possibly find scattered up and down, who make a conscience of observing it. But how very few! How thinly scattered upon the face of the earth! And where is there any body of men, that universally walk thereby? Can we find them in Europe? Or, to go no farther, in Great Britain or Ireland? I fear not: I fear we may search these kingdoms throughout, and yet search in vain. Alas, for the Christian world! Alas, for protestant, for reformed Christians! "O, who will rise up with me against the wicked?" "Who will take God's part" against the evil-speakers? Art "thou the man?" By the grace of God wilt thou be one, who will not be carried away by the torrent? Art thou fully determined, God being thy helper, from this very hour to set a watch, a continual "watch before thy mouth, and keep the door of thy lips?" From this hour wilt thou walk by this rule, "speaking evil of no man?" If thou seest thy brother do evil, wilt thou "tell him of his fault between thee and him alone?" Afterwards "take one or two" witnesses, and then only "tell it to the Church?" If this be the full purpose of thy heart, then learn one lesson well, "Hear evil of no man:" If there were no hearers, there would be no speakers of evil. And is not (according to the vulgar proverb) the receiver as bad as the thief? If, then, any begin to speak evil in thy hearing, check him immediately. Refuse to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so sweetly: let him use ever so soft a manner, so mild an accent.

ever so many professions of good-will for him whom he is stabbing in the dark, whom he smiteth under the fifth rib. Resolutely refuse to hear, though the whisperer complain of being burdened till he speak. Burdened! Thou fool, dost thou travail with thy cursed secret as a woman travaileth with child? Go then, and be delivered of thy burden, in the way the Lord hath ordained. First, "Go, and tell thy brother of his fault between thee and him alone." Next, "take with thee one or two" common friends, and tell him in their presence. If neither of these steps take effect, then "tell it to the Church." But, at the peril of thy soul, tell it to no one else, either before or after, unless in that one exempt case, when it is absolutely needful to preserve the innocent. Why shouldst thou burden another as well as thyself, by making him a partaker of thy sin?

3. O, that all who bear the reproach of Christ, who are in derision called Methodists, would set an example to the Christian world, so called, at least in this one instance! Put ye away evil-speaking, talebearing, whispering: let none of them proceed out of your mouth. See that you "speak evil of no man;" of the absent, nothing but good. If you must be distinguished, whether ye will or not, let this be the distinguishing mark of a Methodist, "He censures no man behind his back: by this fruit ye may know him." What a blessed effect of this self-denial should we quickly feel in our hearts! How would our "peace flow as a river," when we thus "followed peace with all men!" How would the love of God abound in our own souls, while we thus confirmed our love to our brethren! And what an effect would it have on all that were united together in the name of the Lord Jesus! How would brotherly love continually increase, when this grand hinderance of it was removed! All the members of Christ's mystical body would then naturally care for each other! "If one member suffered, all would suffer with it;" "if one was honoured, all would rejoice with it;" and every one would love his brother "with a pure heart fervently." Nor is this all: but what an effect might this have, even on the wild, unthinking world! How soon would they descry in us, what they could not find among all the thousands of their brethren, and cry, (as Julian, the apostate, to his heathen courtiers,) "See how these Christians love one another!" By this chiefly would God convince the world, and prepare them also for his kingdom: as we may easily learn from those remarkable words in our Lord's last, solemn prayer: "I pray for them who shall believe in me, that they may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,—that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The Lord hasten the time! The Lord enable us thus to love one another, not only "in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth," even as Christ hath loved us!

SERMON LIII.

ON THE USE OF MONEY.

"*I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*"—LUKE xvi. 8.

1. OUR Lord, having finished the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, which he had particularly addressed to those who murmured at his receiving publicans and sinners, adds another relation of a different kind, addressed rather to the children of God. "He said unto his disciples," (ver. 1,) not so much to the Scribes and Pharisees, to whom he had been speaking before,—"There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and he was accused to him of wasting his goods. And calling him, he said, Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou canst be no longer steward," (ver. 2.) After reciting the method which the bad steward used to provide against the day of necessity, our Saviour adds, "His lord commended the unjust steward," namely, in this respect, That he used timely precaution, and subjoins this weighty reflection, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light," (ver. 8.) Those who seek no other portion than this world, are wiser (not absolutely; for they are, one and all, the veriest fools, the most egregious madmen under heaven, but "in their generation," in their own way; they are more consistent with themselves, they are truer to their acknowledged principles, they more steadily pursue their end,) "than the children of light," than they who see "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Then follow the words above recited. "And I,"—the only-begotten Son of God, the Creator, Lord, and Possessor of heaven and earth, and all that is therein; the Judge of all, to whom ye are to "give an account of your stewardship," when ye "can be no longer stewards; I say unto you," learn in this respect, even of the unjust steward, "make yourselves friends," by wise, timely precaution, "of the mammon of unrighteousness." *Mammon* means riches or money. It is termed "the mammon of unrighteousness," because of the unrighteous manner wherein it is frequently procured, and wherein even that, which was honestly procured, is generally employed. "Make yourselves friends" of this, by doing all possible good, particularly to the children of God, "that when ye fail," when ye return to dust, when ye have no more place under the sun, those of them who are gone

before, "may receive you," may welcome you, "into everlasting habitations."

2. An excellent branch of Christian wisdom is here inculcated by our Lord on all his followers, namely, The right use of Money; a subject largely spoken of, after their manner, by men of the world; but not sufficiently considered by those whom God hath chosen out of the world. These, generally, do not consider, as the importance of the subject requires, the use of this excellent talent. Neither do they understand how to employ it to the greatest advantage; the introduction of which into the world is one admirable instance of the wise and gracious providence of God. It has, indeed, been the manner of poets, orators, and philosophers, in almost all ages and nations, to rail at this, as the grand corrupter of the world, the bane of virtue, the pest of human society. Hence, nothing so commonly heard as

> Ferrum, ferroque nocentius aurum:
> And gold, more mischievous than keenest steel.

Hence the lamentable complaint,

> Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum.
> Wealth is dug up, incentive to all ill.

Nay, one celebrated writer gravely exhorts his countrymen, in order to banish all vice at once, to "throw all their money into the sea:"

> In mare proximum,
> Summi materiem mali!

But is not all this mere empty rant? Is there any solid reason therein? By no means. For, let the world be as corrupt as it will, is gold or silver to blame? "The love of money," we know, "is the root of all evil:" but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill: and what may not? But it may likewise be used well: it is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life. It is a most compendious instrument of transacting all manner of business, and (if we use it according to Christian wisdom,) of doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a state of innocence, or were all men "filled with the Holy Ghost," so that, like the infant church at Jerusalem, "no man counted any thing he had his own," but "distribution was made to every one as he had need;" the use of it would be superseded; as we cannot conceive there is any thing of the kind among the inhabitants of heaven. But, in the present state of mankind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children, it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveller and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defence for

the oppressed, a mean of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death.

3. It is, therefore, of the highest concern, that all, who fear God, should know how to employ this valuable talent; that they should be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And, perhaps, all the instructions, which are necessary for this, may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of "the mammon of unrighteousness."

I. 1. The first of these is, (he that heareth, let him understand!) "Gain all you can." Here we may speak like the children of the world: we meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life; nor (which is, in effect, the same thing,) at the expense of our health. Therefore, no gain whatsoever should induce us to enter into, or continue in, any employ, which is of such a kind, or is attended with so hard or so long labour, as to impair our constitution. Neither should we begin or continue in any business, which necessarily deprives us of proper seasons for food and sleep in such a proportion as our nature requires. Indeed, there is a great difference here: some employments are absolutely and totally unhealthy; as those which imply the dealing much with arsenic, or other equally hurtful minerals; or the breathing an air tainted with steams of melting lead, which must at length destroy the firmest constitution. Others may not be absolutely unhealthy, but only to persons of a weak constitution. Such are those which require many hours to be spent in writing; especially if a person write sitting, and lean upon his stomach, or remain long in an uneasy posture. But, whatever it is which reason or experience shows to be destructive of health or strength, that we may not submit to; seeing "the life is more" valuable "than meat, and the body than raiment." And, if we are already engaged in such an employ, we should exchange it as soon as possible, for some, which, if it lessen our gain, will, however, not lessen our health.

2. We are, Secondly, to "gain all we can," without hurting our mind any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this: we must preserve, at all events, the spirit of an healthful mind. Therefore, we may not engage or continue in any sinful trade, any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country. Such are all that necessarily imply our robbing or defrauding the king of his lawful customs. For it is, at least, as sinful to defraud the king of his right, as to rob our fellow-subjects. And the king has full as much right to his customs, as we have to our houses and apparel. Other businesses there are, which, however innocent in themselves, cannot be followed with innocence now; at least, not in England: such, for instance, as will not afford a competent maintenance, without cheat-

ing or lying, or conformity to some custom, which is not consistent with a good conscience. These, likewise, are sacredly to be avoided, whatever gain they may be attended with, provided we follow the custom of the trade. For, to gain money, we must not lose our souls. There are yet others which many pursue with perfect innocence, without hurting either their body or mind; and yet, perhaps, you cannot: either they may entangle you in that company, which would destroy your soul: and by repeated experiments it may appear that you cannot separate the one from the other: or there may be an idiosyncrasy,—a peculiarity in your constitution of soul, (as there is in the bodily constitution of many,) by reason whereof that employment is deadly to you, which another may safely follow. So I am convinced, from many experiments, I could not study to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic, or algebra, without being a deist, if not an atheist. And yet, others may study them all their lives, without sustaining any inconvenience. None, therefore, can here determine for another, but every man must judge for himself, and abstain from whatever he in particular finds to be hurtful to his soul.

3. We are, Thirdly, to "gain all we can," without hurting our neighbour. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbour as ourselves. We cannot, if we love every one as ourselves, hurt any one *in his substance.* We cannot devour the increase of his lands, and, perhaps, the lands and houses themselves, by gaming, by overgrown bills, (whether on account of physic, of law, or any thing else,) or by requiring or taking such interest, as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawnbroking is excluded: seeing whatever good we might do thereby, all unprejudiced men see with grief to be abundantly over-balanced by the evil. And if it were otherwise, yet we are not allowed to "do evil that good may come." We cannot, consistently with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market-price. We cannot study to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own. Much less can we entice away, or receive any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain, by swallowing up his neighbour's substance, without gaining the damnation of hell.

4. Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbour *in his body.* Therefore, we may not sell any thing which tends to impair health. Such is, eminently, all that liquid fire, commonly called drams or spirituous liquors. It is true, these may have a place in medicine; they may be of use, in some bodily disorders: (although there would rarely be occasion for them, were it not for the unskilfulness of the practitioner.) Therefore, such as prepare and sell them only for this end, may keep their conscience clear. But who are they? Who prepare them only for this end? Do you know ten such distillers in England? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners-general. They murder his Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell, like sheep: And what is

their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces? A curse is in the midst of them: the curse of God cleaves to the stones, the timber, the furniture of them. The curse of God is in their gardens, their walks, their groves; a fire that burns to the nethermost hell. Blood, blood is there: the foundation, the floor, the walls, the roof, are stained with blood! And canst thou hope, O thou man of blood, though thou art "clothed in scarlet and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day;" canst thou hope to deliver down the *fields of blood*, to the third generation? Not so; for there is a God in heaven: therefore, thy name shall be rooted out. Like as those whom thou hast destroyed, body and soul, "thy memorial shall perish with thee."

5. And are not they partakers of the same guilt, though in a lower degree, whether surgeons, apothecaries, or physicians, who play with the lives or health of men, to enlarge their own gain? Who purposely lengthen the pain or disease, which they are able to remove speedily? Who protract the cure of their patient's body, in order to plunder his substance? Can any man be clear before God, who does not shorten every disorder, "as much as he can," and remove all sickness and pain, "as soon as he can?" He cannot: for nothing can be more clear, than that he does not "do unto others, as he would they should do unto himself."

6. This is dear-bought gain. And so is whatever is procured by hurting our neighbour *in his soul*, by ministering, suppose, either directly or indirectly, to his unchastity or intemperance; which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire of pleasing him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have any thing to do with taverns, victualling-houses, opera-houses, playhouses, or any other places of public, fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent. But, if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sin of various kinds, then, it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. O, beware, lest God say in that day, "These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands."

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounden duty of all, who are engaged in worldly business, to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom with respect to money, "Gain all you can." Gain all you can by honest industry: Use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time: If you understand yourself, and your relation to God and man, you know you have none to spare. If you understand your particular calling, as you ought, you will have no time that hangs upon your hands. Every business will afford some employment sufficient for every day and every hour. That wherein you are placed, if you follow it in earnest, will leave you no leisure for silly, unprofitable diversions. You have always something better to do, something that will profit you, more or less. And "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy

might." Do it as soon as possible: No delay! No putting off from day to day, or from hour to hour. Never leave any thing till to-morrow, which you can do to-day. And do it as well as possible. Do not sleep or yawn over it: Put your whole strength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a slight and careless manner. Let nothing in your business be left undone, if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe, how few do this: how men run on in the same dull track with their forefathers. But whatever they do, who know not God, this is no rule for you. It is a shame for a Christian, not to improve upon *them*, in whatever he takes in hand. You should be continually learning, from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading, and reflection, to do every thing you have to do, better to-day than you did yesterday. And see that you practise whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can." Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expenses, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh: in procuring the pleasures of sense of whatever kind; particularly, in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only; an honest heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly at least) impair the understanding. And yet, (to mention no other effects of it now,) it cannot be maintained without considerable expense. Cut off all this expense: Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by superfluous and expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses, in superfluous or expensive furniture: in costly pictures, painting, gilding, books: in elegant, rather than useful, gardens. Let your neighbours, who know nothing better, do this; "Let the dead bury their dead." But "what is that to thee?" says our Lord: "Follow thou me." Are you willing? Then you are able so to do.

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expense is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify

their eye, or their imagination, but their vanity too. "So long as thou dost well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." So long as thou art "clothed in purple and fine linen, and farest sumptuously every day," no doubt many will applaud thy elegance of taste, thy generosity and hospitality. But do not buy their applause so dear. Rather be content with the honour that cometh from God.

5. Who would expend any thing in gratifying these desires, if he considered, that to gratify them is to increase them. Nothing can be more certain than this: daily experience shows, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever, therefore, you expend any thing to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out your money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity, for a stronger attachment to those pleasures which perish in their using. While you are purchasing any thing which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you not then enough of vanity, sensuality, curiosity, before? Was there need of any addition? And would you pay for it too? What manner of wisdom is this? Would not the literally throwing your money into the sea, be a less mischievous folly?

6. And why should you throw away money upon your children, any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind? Why should you purchase for them more pride or lust, more vanity or foolish and hurtful desires? They do not want any more: they have enough already: Nature has made ample provision for them. Why should you be at farther expense to increase their temptations and snares, and to pierce them through with many sorrows?

7. Do not leave it to them to throw away. If you have good reason to believe they would waste what is now in your possession, in gratifying, and thereby increasing the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; at the peril of theirs and your own soul, do not set these traps in their way. Do not offer your sons or your daughters unto Belial, any more than unto Moloch. Have pity upon them, and remove out of their way what you may easily foresee would increase their sins, and, consequently, plunge them deeper into everlasting perdition. How amazing, then, is the infatuation of those parents, who think they can never leave their children enough! What! cannot you leave them enough of arrows, firebrands, and death? Not enough of foolish and hurtful desires? Not enough of pride, lust, ambition, vanity? Not enough of everlasting burnings? Poor wretch! Thou fearest where no fear is. Surely both thou and they, when ye are lifting up your eyes in hell, will have enough both of "the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that never shall be quenched!"

8. "What then would you do, if you were in my case? If you had a considerable fortune to leave?" Whether I *would* do it, or not, I know what I *ought* to do: This will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money, one who, I believed, would put it to the true use, I should think it my

absolute, indispensable duty, to leave that child the bulk of my fortune; and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. "But what if all your children were equally ignorant of the true use of money?" I ought then, (hard saying! Who can hear it?) to give each what would keep him above want: and to bestow all the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine, that he has done any thing barely by going thus far, by "gaining and saving all he can," if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a further end. Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save any thing, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the Bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If, therefore, you would indeed "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," add the third rule to the two preceding. Having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can.

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, When the possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, he placed you here not as a proprietor, but a steward. As such he intrusted you for a season with goods of various kinds. But the sole property of these still rests in him, nor can ever be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you in most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be all a holy sacrifice, acceptable through Christ Jesus. And this light, easy service, he hath promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The directions which God hath given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be comprised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and a wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods, which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resuming whenever it pleases him, First, provide things needful for yourself, food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving the body in health and strength: Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others, who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there be an overplus left, then "do good to them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you give all you can: nay, in a sound sense, all you have: for all that is laid out in this manner, is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but also, by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.

4. If then a doubt should at any time arise in your mind, concern-

ing what you are going to expend, either on yourself or any part of your family, you have an easy way to remove it. Calmly and seriously inquire, 1. In expending this, am I acting according to my character? Am I acting herein, not as a proprietor, but as a steward of my Lord's goods? 2. Am I doing this in obedience to his word? In what portion of it does he require me so to do? 3. Can I offer up this action, this expense, as a sacrifice to God through Jesus Christ? 4. Have I reason to believe, that for this very work I shall have a reward at the resurrection of the just? You will seldom need any thing more to remove any doubt which arises on this head; but, by this four-fold consideration, you will receive clear light as to the way wherein you should go.

5. If any doubt still remain, you may farther examine yourself by prayer, according to those heads of inquiry. Try whether you can say to the Searcher of Hearts, your conscience not condemning you, "Lord, thou seest, I am going to expend this sum, on that food, apparel, furniture. And thou knowest, I act therein with a single eye, as a steward of thy goods, expending this portion of them thus, in pursuance of the design thou hadst in intrusting me with them. Thou knowest I do this in obedience to thy word, as thou commandest, and because thou commandest it. Let this, I beseech thee, be a holy sacrifice, acceptable through Jesus Christ! And give me a witness in myself, that for this labour of love, I shall have a recompense, when thou rewardest every man according to his works." Now, if your conscience bear you witness in the Holy Ghost, that this prayer is well-pleasing to God, then have you no reason to doubt, but that expense is right and good, and such as will never make you ashamed.

6. You see, then, what it is, to "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," and by what means you may procure, "that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." You see the nature and extent of true Christian prudence, so far as it relates to the use of that great talent, Money. Gain all you can, without hurting either yourself or your neighbour, in soul or body, by applying hereto with unintermitted diligence, and with all the understanding which God has given you. Save all you can, by cutting off every expense, which serves only to indulge foolish desire: to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. Waste nothing, living or dying, on sin or folly, whether for yourself or your children. And then give all you can, or, in other words, give all you have to God. Do not stint yourself, like a Jew rather than a Christian, to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half; but all that is God's, be it more or less: By employing all, on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship, when ye can be no longer stewards: In such a manner as the oracles of God direct, both by general and particular precepts: In such a manner, that whatever ye do may be "a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God;" and

that every act may be rewarded in that day, when the Lord cometh with all his saints.

7. Brethren, can we be either wise or faithful stewards, unless we thus manage our Lord's goods? We cannot, as not only the oracles of God, but our own conscience beareth witness. Then why should we delay? Why should we confer any longer with flesh and blood, or the men of the world? Our kingdom, our wisdom, is not of this world: Heathen custom is nothing to us. We follow no men any farther than they are followers of Christ. Hear ye him: yea, to-day, while it is called to-day, hear and obey his voice. At this hour, and from this hour, do his will: Fulfil his word, in this and in all things. I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling. No more sloth! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might. No more waste! Cut off every expense which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand. No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has intrusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, and in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, to all men. This is no small part of "the wisdom of the just:" Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him, who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son: So "laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life."

SERMON LIV.

ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW CHAPEL, CITY-ROAD, LONDON, APRIL 21, 1777.

"*According to this time, it shall be said, What hath GOD wrought!*" NUMBERS xxiii. 23.

1. WE need not now inquire, in what sense this was applicable to the children of Israel. It may be of more use to consider in what sense the words are applicable to ourselves: how far the people of England have reason to say, "According to this time, what hath God wrought!"

2. A great man, indeed, who, I trust, is now in a better world, Dr. Gibson, late lord bishop of London, in one of his charges to his clergy, flatly denies, that God has wrought any "extraordinary work" in our nation: nay, affirms, that to imagine any such thing, is no better than downright enthusiasm. It is so, if his lordship's supposition is true, if God has not wrought any extraordinary work. But,

if he really has, then we may believe and assert it, without incurring any such imputation.

3. Yet, a still greater man of a neighbouring nation, a burning and a shining light, equally eminent in piety and in learning, partly confirmed the bishop's supposition. For Bengelius being asked, Why he placed the grand revival of religion so late as the year 1836, replied, "I acknowledge all the prophecies would incline me to place it a century sooner. But an insurmountable difficulty lies in the way: I cannot reconcile this to matter of fact. For I do not know of any remarkable work of God which has been wrought upon earth between the years 1730 and 1740" This is really surprising. It is strange that sensible men should know so little of what is done at so small a distance. How could so great a man be ignorant of what was transacted no farther off than England? Especially considering the accounts then published in Germany, some of which were tolerably impartial: nay, considering the particular account which I had sent, as early as the year 1742, to one well known through all the empire, Pastor (afterwards Superintendent) Steinmetz.

4. "But has there, indeed, been any extraordinary work of God wrought in England during this century?" This is an important question: it is certainly worthy of our serious consideration. And it is capable of being answered to the full satisfaction of every fair inquirer. He may easily be informed, what work it is, and in what manner it has been wrought. It is true, I am in one respect an improper person to give this information; as it will oblige me frequently to speak of myself, which may have the appearance of ostentation. But, with regard to this, I can only cast myself upon the candour of my hearers, being persuaded they will put the most favourable construction upon what is not a matter of choice, but of necessity. For there is no other person, if I decline the task, who can supply my place, who has a perfect knowledge of the work in question, from the beginning of it to this day. We may consider, First, The rise and progress of this work: Secondly, The nature of it.

I. 1. As to the rise of it. In the year 1725, a young student at Oxford was much affected by reading Kempis's Christian Pattern, and Bishop Taylor's Rules of Holy Living and Dying. He found an earnest desire to live according to those rules, and to flee from the wrath to come. He sought for some that would be his companions in the way, but could find none; so that, for several years, he was constrained to travel alone, having no man either to guide or to help him. But, in the year 1729, he found one who had the same desire. They then endeavoured to help each other, and, in the close of the year, were joined by two more. They soon agreed to spend two or three hours together every Sunday evening. Afterwards they met together two evenings, and, in a while, six evenings in the week: spending that time in reading the Scriptures, and provoking one another to love and to good works.

2. The regularity of their behaviour gave occasion to a young gentleman of the college to say, "I think we have got a new set of

Methodists :" alluding to a set of physicians, who began to flourish at Rome about the time of Nero, and continued for several ages. The name was new and quaint : it clave to them immediately. And from that time, both those four young gentlemen, and all that had any religious connexion with them, were distinguished by the name of *Methodists.*

3. In the four or five years following, another and another were added to the number, till, in the year 1735, there were fourteen of them who constantly met together. Three of these were Tutors in their several colleges ; the rest, Bachelors of Arts, or under-graduates. They were all precisely of one judgment, as well as of one soul. All tenacious of order to the last degree, and observant, for conscience' sake, of every rule of the church, and every statute, both of the university, and of their respective colleges. They were all orthodox in every point ; firmly believing, not only the three creeds, but whatsoever they judged to be the doctrine of the Church of England, as contained in her Articles and Homilies. As to that practice of the apostolic church, (which continued to the time of Tertullian, at least in many churches,) the " having all things in common," they had no rule, nor any formed design concerning it. But it was so in effect, and it could not be otherwise ; for none was suffered to want any thing that another could spare. This was the infancy of the work. They had no conception of any thing that would follow. Indeed, they took no " thought for the morrow," desiring only to live " to-day."

4. Many imagined that little society would be dispersed, and *Methodism* (so called) come to an end, when, in October, 1735, my brother, Mr. Ingham, and I, were induced, by a strange chain of providences, to go over to the new colony in Georgia. Our design was to preach to the Indian nations bordering upon that province. . But we were detained at Savannah and Frederica, by the importunity of the people: who, having no other ministers, earnestly requested, that we would not leave them. After a time, I desired the most serious of them to meet me once or twice a week at my house. Here were the rudiments of a *Methodist* Society; but, notwithstanding this, both my brother and I were as vehemently attached to the Church as ever, and to every rubric of it: insomuch that I would never admit a Dissenter to the Lord's-Supper, unless he would be rebaptized. Nay, when the Lutheran minister of the Saltzburghers at Ebenezer, being at Savannah, desired to receive it, I told him I " did not dare to administer it to him, because I looked upon him as unbaptized : as I judged baptism by laymen to be invalid : and such I counted all that were not episcopally ordained."

5. Full of these sentiments, of this zeal for the Church, (from which, I bless God, he has now delivered me,) I returned to England in the beginning of February 1738. I was now in haste to retire to Oxford, and bury myself in my beloved obscurity. But I was detained in London, week after week, by the trustees for the colony of Georgia. In the mean time, I was continually importuned to preach in one

or another Church, and that not only morning, afternoon, and night, on Sundays, but on week-days also. As I was lately come from a far country, vast multitudes flocked together. But in a short time, partly because of those unwieldy crowds, partly because of my unfashionable doctrine, I was excluded from one and another Church, and, at length, shut out of all. Not daring to be silent, after a short struggle between honour and conscience, I made a virtue of necessity, and preached in the middle of Moorfields. Here were thousands upon thousands, abundantly more than any Church could contain: and numbers among them, who never went to any church or place of public worship at all. More and more of them were cut to the heart, and came to me all in tears, inquiring with the utmost eagerness, "what they must do to be saved?" I said, "If all of you will meet on Thursday evening, I will advise you as well as I can." The first evening about twelve persons came: the next week, thirty or forty. When they were increased to about a hundred, I took down their names and places of abode, intending, as often as it was convenient, to call upon them at their own houses. Thus, without any previous plan or design, began the *Methodist Society* in England, a company of people associating together, to help each other to work out their own salvation.

6. The next spring we were invited to Bristol and Kingswood, where, likewise, Societies were quickly formed. The year following we went to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and preached to all the colliers and keelmen round it. In 1744 we went through Cornwall, as far as Sennan, near the Land's-End; and, in the compass of two or three years more, to almost every part of England. Some time after we were desired to go over to Ireland, and, in process of time, to every county therein. Last of all we were invited to Musselborough, Glasgow, and several other parts of Scotland. But it was in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Arbroath, and Aberdeen, that we saw the greatest fruit of our labour.

II. 1. Such was the rise, and such has been the progress of *Methodism*, from the beginning to the present time. But you will naturally ask, What is *Methodism?* What does this new word mean? Is it not a new religion? This is a very common, nay, almost an universal supposition; but nothing can be more remote from the truth. It is a mistake all over. *Methodism*, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive church, the religion of the Church of England. This *old religion*, (as I observed in the Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion,) is "no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved *us*, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy: and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul. This love is the great medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is humbleness of mind, gentleness, long-

suffering, the whole image of God, and, at the same time, a peace that passeth all understanding, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. This religion of love, and joy, and peace, has its seat in the inmost soul, but is ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing up, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but, likewise, in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it."

2. This is the "religion of the Bible," as no one can deny, who reads it with any attention. It is the religion which is continually inculcated therein, which runs through both the Old and New Testament. Moses and the Prophets, our Blessed Lord and his Apostles, proclaim, with one voice, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself." The Bible declares, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," "the end of the commandment," of all the commandments which are contained in the Oracles of God. The inward and outward fruits of this love are also largely described by the inspired writers; so that whoever allows the Scripture to be the word of God, must allow this to be true religion.

3. This is the "religion of the primitive church," of the whole church in the purest ages. It is clearly expressed even in the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, and Polycarp. It is seen more at large in the writings of Tertullian, Origen, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Cyprian. And even in the fourth century, it was found in the works of Chrysostom, Basil, Ephrem Syrus, and Macarius. It would be easy to produce a cloud of witnesses, testifying the same thing; were not this a point which no one will contest, who has the least acquaintance with Christian antiquity.

4. And this is the "religion of the Church of England," as appears from all her authentic records, from the uniform tenor of her Liturgy, and from numberless passages in her Homilies. The scriptural primitive religion of love, which is now reviving throughout the three kingdoms, is to be found in her Morning and Evening Service, and in her daily as well as occasional Prayers: and the whole of it is beautifully summed up in that one comprehensive petition, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name."

5. Permit me to give a little fuller account both of the progress and nature of this religion, by an extract from a treatise which was published many years ago.*

"Just at the time when we wanted little of filling up the measure of our iniquities, two or three clergymen of the Church of England began vehemently to call sinners to repentance. Many thousands gathered together to hear them: and, in every place where they came, many began to show such a concern for religion, as they never had done before. Many were in a short time deeply convinced of the number and heinousness of their sins, of their evil tempers, of their inability to help themselves, and of the insignificancy of their *outside religion*. And from this repentance sprung fruits meet for repent-

* Farther Appeal, Part III.

ance: the whole form of their lives was changed. They "ceased to do evil, and learned to do well." Neither was this all: but over and above this outward change, they began to experience *inward religion.* The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, which they enjoy to this day. They "love him, because he first loved us;" and this love constrains them to love all mankind, and inspires them with every holy and heavenly temper, with the mind which was in Christ. Hence it is, that they are now uniform in their behaviour, unblamable in all manner of conversation, and in whatsoever state they are, they have learned therewith to be content. Thus they calmly travel on through life, never repining, or murmuring, or dissatisfied, till the hour comes, that they shall drop this covering of earth, and return to the Father of spirits."

6. This revival of religion has spread to "such a degree, as neither we nor our fathers had known. How *extensive* has it been! There is scarce a considerable town in the kingdom, where some have not been made witnesses of it. It has spread to every age and sex, to most orders and degrees of men: and even to abundance of those who, in time past, were accounted monsters of wickedness.

"Consider the *swiftness* as well as extent of it. In what age has such a number of sinners been recovered in so short a time from the error of their ways! When has true religion, I will not say since the Reformation, but since the time of Constantine the Great, made so large a progress in any nation, within so small a space? I believe, hardly can either ancient or modern history afford a parallel instance.

7. "We may likewise observe the *depth* of the work so extensively and swiftly wrought. Multitudes have been thoroughly convinced of sin; and shortly after, so filled with joy and love, that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, they could hardly tell. And in the power of this love, they have trampled under foot whatever the world accounts either terrible or desirable, having evidenced, in the severest trials, an invariable and tender good-will to mankind, and all the fruits of holiness. Now so deep a repentance, so strong a faith, such fervent love, and such unblemished holiness, wrought in so many persons in so short a time, the world has not seen for many ages.

8. "No less remarkable is the *purity* of the religion which has extended itself so deeply and swiftly: I speak particularly as to the doctrines held by those who are the subjects of it. Those of the Church of England, at least, must acknowledge this. For where is there a body of people, who, number for number, so closely adhere to the doctrines of the church?

"Nor is their religion more pure from *heresy*, than it is from *superstition.* In former times, wherever any unusual religious concern has appeared, there has sprung up with it a *zeal* for things that were no part of religion. But it has not been so in the present case: no stress has been laid on any thing, as though it were necessary to salvation, but what is plainly contained in the word of God. And of the things contained therein, the stress laid on each has been in pro-

portion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all; the love of God and our neighbour. So pure, both from superstition and error, is the religion which has lately spread in this nation.

9. "It is likewise *rational*. It is as pure from *enthusiasm* as from superstition. It is true, the contrary has been continually affirmed. But to affirm, is one thing; to prove, is another. Who will prove, that it is *enthusiasm* to love God? Yea, to love him with all our heart? Who is able to make good this charge, against the love of all mankind? (I do but just touch on the general heads.) But if you cannot make it good, own this religion to be sober, manly, rational, divine.

10. "It is also pure from *bigotry*. Those who hold it, are not bigotted to *opinions*. They would hold right opinions: but they are peculiarly cautious, not to rest the weight of Christianity there. They have no such over-grown fondness for any opinions, as to think those alone will make them Christians; or to confine their affection, or esteem, to those that agree with them therein. Nor are they bigotted to any particular branch even of practical religion. They are not attached to one point more than another; they aim at uniform, universal obedience. They contend for nothing circumstantial, as if it were essential to religion, but for every thing in its own order.

11. "They dread that *bitter zeal*, that spirit of *persecution*, which has so often accompanied the spirit of reformation. They do not approve of using any kind of violence, on any pretence, in matters of religion. They allow no method of bringing any to the knowledge of the truth, except the methods of reason and persuasion. And their practice is consistent with their profession. They do not, in fact, hinder their dependants from worshipping God, in every respect, according to their own conscience."

But if these things are so, may we not well say, "What hath God wrought!" For such a work, if we consider the *extensiveness* of it, the *swiftness* with which it has spread, the *depth* of the religion so swiftly diffused, and its *purity* from all corrupt mixtures, we must acknowledge, cannot easily be paralleled, in all these concurrent circumstances, by any thing that is found in the English annals, since Christianity was first planted in this island.

12. It may throw considerable light upon the nature of this work, to mention one circumstance more, attending the present revival of religion, which, I apprehend, is quite peculiar to it. I do not remember to have either seen, heard, or read of any thing parallel. It cannot be denied, that there have been several revivals of religion in England since the Reformation. But the generality of the English nation were little profited thereby: because they that were the subjects of those revivals, preachers as well as people, soon separated from the established church, and formed themselves into a distinct sect. So did the Presbyterians first, afterwards the Independents, the Anabaptists, and the Quakers. And after this was done, they did scarce any good, except to their own little body. As they chose to separate from the Church, so the people, remaining therein, sepa-

rated from them, and generally contracted a prejudice against them. But these were immensely the greatest number: so that, by that unhappy separation, the hope of a general, national reformation was totally cut off.

13. But is it not so in the present revival of religion. The *Methodists* (so termed) know their calling. They weighed the matter at first, and, upon mature deliberation, determined to continue in the Church. Since that time, they have not wanted temptations of every kind to alter their resolution. They have heard abundance said upon the subject, perhaps all that can be said. They have read the writings of the most eminent pleaders for separation, both in the last and present century. They have spent several days in a general conference upon this very question, "Is it *expedient* (supposing, not granting that it is *lawful*) to separate from the Established Church?" But still they could see no sufficient cause to depart from their first resolution. So that their fixed purpose is, let the clergy or laity use them well or ill, by the grace of God, to endure all things, to hold on their even course, and to continue in the Church, maugre men or devils, unless God permits them to be thrust out.

14. Near twenty years ago, immediately after their solemn consultation on the subject, a clergyman, who had heard the whole, said, with great earnestness, "In the name of God, let nothing move you to recede from this resolution. God is with you of a truth: and so he will be, while you continue in the Church. But whenever the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them." Lord, what is man! In a few months after, Mr. Ingham himself left the Church, and turned all the societies under his care into congregations of *Independents*. And what was the event? The same that he had foretold. They swiftly mouldered into nothing.

Some years after, a person of honour told me, "This is the peculiar glory of the Methodists. However convenient it might be, they will not, on any account or pretence whatever, form a distinct sect or party. Let no one rob you of this glorying." I trust, none will, as long as I live. But the giver of this advice entirely forgot in a very short time, and has, almost ever since, been labouring to form *Independent* congregations.

15. This has occasioned many to ask, "Why do you say, The *Methodists* form no distinct party? That they do not leave the Church? Are there not thousands of Methodists who have, in fact, left the Church? Who never attend the Church-service? Never receive the Lord's Supper there? Nay, who speak against the Church, even with bitterness, both in public and private? Yea, who appoint and frequent meetings for divine service at the same hour? How then can you affirm, that the Methodists do not leave the Church?"

I am glad of so public an opportunity of explaining this: in order to which, it will be necessary to look back some years. The Methodists at Oxford were all one body, and, as it were, one soul; zealous for the religion of the Bible, of the primitive church, and in consequence, of the Church of England: as they believed, it came

nearer the scriptural and primitive plan, than any other national Church upon earth.

When my brother and I returned from Georgia, we were in the same sentiments. And at that time, we and our friends were the only persons to whom that innocent name was affixed. Thus far, therefore, all the Methodists were firm to the Church of England.

16. But a good man, who met with us when we were at Oxford, while he was absent from us, conversed much with Dissenters, and contracted strong prejudices against the Church; I mean Mr. Whitefield: and not long after, he totally separated from *us*. In some years, William Cudworth and several others separated from him, and turned *Independents:* as did Mr. Maxfield and a few more, after separating from us. Lastly, a school was set up near Trevecka, in Wales: and almost all who were educated there, (except those that were ordained, and some of them too,) as they disclaimed all connexion with the Methodists, so they disclaimed the Church also. Nay, they spoke of it, upon all occasions, with exquisite bitterness and contempt.

Now let every impartial person judge, whether we are accountable for any of these! None of these have any manner of connexion with the original Methodists. They are branches broken off from the tree: if they break from the Church also, we are not accountable for it.

These, therefore, cannot make our glorying void, That we do not, will not, form any separate sect, but from principle remain, what we always have been, true members of the Church of England.

17. Brethren, I presume the greater part of you also are members of the Church of England. So at least you are called: but you are not so indeed, unless you are witnesses of the religion above described. And are you really such? Judge not one another; but every man look into his own bosom. How stands the matter in your own breast? Examine your conscience before God. Are you a happy partaker of this scriptural, this truly primitive religion? Are you a witness of the religion of love? Are you a lover of God and all mankind? Does your heart glow with gratitude to the giver of every good and perfect gift? The Father of the spirits of all flesh, who giveth you life, and breath, and all things? Who hath given you his Son, his only Son, that you "might not perish, but have everlasting life." Is your soul warm with benevolence to all mankind? Do you long to have all men virtuous and happy? And does the constant tenor of your life and conversation bear witness of this? Do you "love, not in word only, but in deed and in truth?" Do you persevere in the "work of faith, and the labour of love?" Do you "walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us?" Do you, as you have time, "do good unto all men?" And in as high a degree as you are able? *Whosoever* thus "doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven," said Jesus, "the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Whosoever thou art, whose heart is herein as my heart, give me thine hand. Come, and let us magnify the Lord together, and labour to promote his kingdom upon

earth. Let us join hearts and hands in this blessed work, in striving to bring glory to God in the highest, by establishing peace and good-will among men, to the uttermost of our power. First, let our hearts be joined herein: let us unite our wishes and prayers: let our whole soul pant after a general revival of pure religion and undefiled, the restoration of the image of God, pure love, in every child of man. Then let us endeavour to promote, in our several stations, this scriptural, primitive religion: let us, with all diligence, diffuse the religion of love among all we have any intercourse with: let us provoke all men, not to enmity and contention, but to love and good works: always remembering those deep words, (God engrave them on all our hearts!) "God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him!"

SERMON LV.

ON FREE GRACE.

"*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*"—ROMANS viii. 32.

1. HOW freely does God love the world! While we were yet sinners, "Christ died for the ungodly." While we were "dead in sin, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." And how "freely with him does he give us all things." Verily, *Free Grace* is all in all!

2. The Grace or Love of God, whence cometh our salvation, is free in all, and free for all.

3. First: It is free in all to whom it is given. It does not depend on any power or merit in man; no, not in any degree, neither in whole nor in part. It does not, in anywise, depend either on the good works or righteousness of the receiver: not in any thing he has done, or any thing he is. It does not depend on his endeavours. It does not depend on his good tempers, or good desires, or good purposes and intentions. For all these flow from the free grace of God: they are the streams only, not the fountain. They are the fruits of free grace, and not the root. They are not the cause, but the effects of it. Whatsoever good is in man, or is done by man, God is the author and doer of it. Thus is his grace free in all, that is, no way depending on any power, or merit in man; but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and "with him freely giveth us all things."

4. But is it free for all, as well as in all? To this some have

answered, "No: It is free only for those whom God hath ordained to life; and they are but a little flock. The greater part of mankind God hath ordained to death; and it is not free for them. Them God hateth; and, therefore, before they were born, decreed they should die eternally. And this he absolutely decreed, because so was his good pleasure; because it was his sovereign will. Accordingly they are born for this, to be destroyed, body and soul in hell. And they grow up under the irrevocable curse of God, without any possibility of redemption. For what grace God gives, he gives only for this, 'To increase, not to prevent, their damnation.'"

5. This is that decree of Predestination. But methinks I hear one say, "This is not the predestination which I hold. I hold only, the Election of Grace. What I believe is no more than this, That God, before the foundation of the world, did elect a certain number of men, to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. Now all these will be saved, and none else. For the rest of mankind God leaves to themselves. So they follow the imaginations of their own hearts, which are only evil continually, and waxing worse and worse, are, at length, justly punished with everlasting destruction."

6. Is this all the predestination which you hold? Consider. Perhaps this is not all. Do you not believe, "God ordained them to this very thing?" If so, you believe the whole decree; you hold predestination in the full sense, which has been above described. But it may be, you think you do not. Do not you then believe, that God hardens the hearts of them that perish? Do not you believe, He (literally) hardened Pharaoh's heart, and that for this end he raised him up (or created him?) Why this amounts to just the same thing. If you believe Pharaoh, or any other man upon earth, was created for this end, to be damned, you hold all that has been said of Predestination. And there is no need you should add, that God seconds his decree, which is supposed unchangeable and irresistible, by hardening the hearts of those vessels of wrath, whom that decree had before fitted for destruction.

7. Well; but it may be, you do not believe even this. You do not hold any decree of reprobation. You do not think God decrees any man to be damned, nor hardens, nor irresistibly fits him for damnation. You only say, "God eternally decreed, that all being dead in sin, he would say to some of the dry bones, LIVE, and to others he would not. That consequently, these should be made alive, and those abide in death: these should glorify God by their salvation, and those by their destruction."

8. Is not this what you mean by *the election of grace?* If it be, I would ask one or two questions. Are any who are not thus elected, saved? Or, were any, from the foundation of the world? Is it possible any man should be saved, unless he be thus elected? If you say, *No*, you are but where you were. You are not got one hairs' breadth farther. You still believe that in consequence of an unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, the greater part of mankind abide in death, without any possibility of redemption: inasmuch as none can

save them but God: and he will not save them. You believe he hath absolutely decreed, not to save them; and what is this, but decreeing to damn them? It is, in effect, neither more nor less: it comes to the same thing. For if you are dead, and altogether unable to make yourself alive; then if God has absolutely decreed, he will make only others alive, and not you; he hath absolutely decreed your everlasting death; you are absolutely consigned to damnation. So then, though you use softer words than some, you mean the self-same thing. And God's decree concerning the election of grace, according to your own account of it, amounts to neither more nor less, than what others call, "God's decree of reprobation."

9. Call it, therefore, by whatever name you please, "Election, Preterition, Predestination, or Reprobation," it comes, in the end, to the same thing. The sense of all is plainly this, "By virtue of an eternal, unchangeable, irresistible decree of God, one part of mankind are infallibly saved, and the rest infallibly damned: it being impossible that any of the former should be damned, or that any of the latter should be saved."

10. But if this be so, then all preaching is vain. It is needless to them that are elected. For they, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be saved. Therefore, the end of preaching, "To save souls," is void with regard to them. And it is useless to them that are not elected, for they cannot possibly be saved. They, whether with preaching or without, will infallibly be damned. The end of preaching is, therefore, void with regard to them likewise; so that, in either case, our preaching is vain, as your hearing is also vain.

11. This, then, is a plain proof, that the doctrine of Predestination is not a doctrine of God, because it makes void the ordinance of God: and God is not divided against himself. A second is, that it directly tends to destroy that holiness, which is the end of all the ordinances of God. I do not say, "None who hold it are holy." (For God is of tender mercy to those who are unavoidably entangled in errors of any kind.) But that the doctrine itself, "That every man is either elected or not elected from eternity, and that the one must inevitably be saved, and the other inevitably damned," has a manifest tendency to destroy holiness in general. For it wholly takes away those first motives to follow after it, so frequently proposed in Scripture, the hope of future reward and fear of punishment, the hope of heaven and fear of hell. That "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, and those into life eternal," is no motive to him to struggle for life, who believes his lot is cast already: it is not reasonable for him so to do, if he thinks he is unalterably adjudged either to life or death. You will say, "But he knows not whether it is life or death." What then? This helps not the matter. For if a sick man knows that he must unavoidably die, or unavoidably recover, though he knows not which, it is not reasonable for him to take any physic at all. He might justly say, (and so I have heard some speak, both in bodily sickness and in spiritual,) "If I am ordained to life, I shall live; if to death I shall die: so I need not trouble myself about it." So directly does this

doctrine tend to shut the very gate of holiness in general, to hinder unholy men from ever approaching thereto, or striving to enter in thereat.

12. As directly does this doctrine tend to destroy several particular branches of holiness. Such are meekness and love: Love, I mean, of our enemies, of the evil and unthankful. I say not, that none who hold it, have meekness and love: (for as is the power of God, so is his mercy.) But that it naturally tends to inspire or increase a sharpness or eagerness of temper which is quite contrary to the meekness of Christ, as then especially appears when they are opposed on this head. And it as naturally inspires contempt or coldness towards those whom we suppose outcasts from God. "O," but you say, "I suppose no particular man a reprobate." You mean, you would not, if you could help it. You cannot help sometimes applying your general doctrine to particular persons. The enemy of souls will apply it for you. You know how often he has done so. "But you rejected the thought with abhorrence." True; as soon as you could. But how did it sour and sharpen your spirit in the meantime! You well know it was not the spirit of love which you then felt towards that poor sinner, whom you supposed or suspected, whether you would or not, to have been hated of God from eternity.

13. Thirdly: This doctrine tends to destroy the comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity. This is evident as to all those who believe themselves to be reprobated, or who only suspect or fear it. All the great and precious promises are lost to them. They afford them no ray of comfort: "for they are not the elect of God, therefore they have neither lot nor portion in them." This is an effectual bar to their finding any comfort or happiness, even in that religion, whose ways were designed to be "ways of pleasantness and all her paths peace."

14. And as to you, who believe yourselves the elect of God, what is your happiness? I hope, not a notion, a speculative belief; a bare opinion of any kind: but a feeling possession of God in your heart, wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; or "The witness of God's Spirit with your spirit, that you are a child of God." This, otherwise termed, "the full assurance of faith," is the true ground of a Christian's happiness. And it does indeed imply, a full assurance that all your past sins are forgiven, and that you are *now* a child of God. But it does not necessarily imply, a full assurance of our future perseverance. I do not say, this is never joined to it: but that it is not necessarily implied therein; for many have the one, who have not the other.

15. Now this witness of the Spirit, experience shows, to be much obstructed by this doctrine: and not only in those, who, believing themselves reprobated, by this belief, have thrust it far from them: but even in them that have "tasted of that good gift," who yet have soon lost it again, and fallen back into doubt, and fears, and darkness, *horrible darkness* that might be *felt*. And I appeal to any of you who hold this doctrine, to say between God and your own hearts, whether you have not often a return of doubts and fears concerning your elec-

tion or perseverance? If you ask, Who has not? I answer, Very few of those that hold this doctrine. But many, very many of those that hold it not, in all parts of the earth; many of those who know and feel they are in Christ to-day, and "take no thought for the morrow;" who "abide in him" by faith from hour to hour, or rather, from moment to moment; many of these have enjoyed the uninterrupted witness of his Spirit, the continual light of his countenance, from the moment wherein they first believed, for many months or years, to this day.

16. That assurance of faith which these enjoy, excludes all doubt and fear. It excludes all kinds of doubt and fear concerning their future perseverance: though it is not properly, as was said before, an assurance of what is future: but only of what *now* is. And this needs not for its support, a speculative belief, that whoever is once ordained to life, must live. But it is wrought from hour to hour, by the mighty power of God, "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them." And, therefore, that doctrine is not of God, because it tends to obstruct, if not destroy, this great work of the Holy Ghost, whence flows the chief comfort of religion, the happiness of Christianity.

17. Again: How uncomfortable a thought is this, that thousands and millions of men, without any preceding offence or fault of theirs were unchangeably doomed to everlasting burnings! How peculiarly uncomfortable must it be to those who have put on Christ! To those, who, being filled with "bowels of mercy, tenderness, and compassion," could even "wish themselves accursed for their brethren's sake!"

18. Fourthly: This uncomfortable doctrine directly tends to destroy our zeal for good works. And this it does, first, as it naturally tends to destroy our love to the greater part of mankind, viz. the evil and unthankful. For whatever lessens our love, must so far lessen our desire to do them good. This it does, secondly, as it cuts off one of the strongest motives to all acts of bodily mercy, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and the like, viz. the hope of saving their souls from death. For what avails it to relieve their temporal wants, who are just dropping into eternal fire? 'Well; but run and snatch them as brands out of the fire.' Nay, this you suppose impossible. They were appointed thereunto, you say, from eternity, before they had done either good or evil. You believe it is the will of God they should die. And "who hath resisted his will?" But you say, "you do not know, whether these are elected or not." What then? If you know they are one or the other, that they are either elected, or not elected, all your labour is void and vain. In either case, your advice, reproof, or exhortation, is as needless and useless as our preaching. It is needless to them that are elected; for they will infallibly be saved without it. It is useless to them that are not elected; for with, or without it, they will infallibly be damned. Therefore, you cannot, consistently with your principles, take any pains about their salvation. Consequently those principles directly tend

to destroy your zeal for good works: for all good works; but particularly for the greatest of all, the saving of souls from death.

19. But, fifthly, This doctrine not only tends to destroy Christian holiness, happiness, and good works, but hath also a direct and manifest tendency to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation. The point which the wisest of the modern unbelievers most industriously labour to prove, is, that the Christian Revelation is not necessary. They well know, could they once show this, the conclusion would be too plain to be denied, "If it be not necessary, it is not true." Now this fundamental point you give up. For supposing that eternal, unchangeable decree, one part of mankind must be saved, though the Christian Revelation were not in being: and the other part of mankind must be damned, notwithstanding that Revelation: and what would an infidel desire more? You allow him all he asks. In making the gospel thus unnecessary to all sorts of men, you give up the whole Christian cause. "O tell it not in Gath! Publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice," lest the sons of unbelief triumph!

20. And as this doctrine manifestly and directly tends to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, so it does the same thing, by plain consequence, in making that Revelation contradict itself. For it is grounded on such an interpretation of some texts (more or less it matters not,) as flatly contradicts all the other texts, and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture. For instance, the assertors of this doctrine interpret that text of Scripture, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," as implying that God, in a literal sense, hated Esau, and all the reprobated, from eternity. Now what can possibly be a more flat contradiction than this, not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts, which expressly declare, "God is love?" Again, they infer from that text, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," (Rom. ix. 15,) that God is love only to some men, viz. the elect, and that he hath mercy for those only; flatly contrary to which is the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, as is that express declaration in particular, "The Lord is loving unto *every* man, and his mercy is over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. Again, they infer from that and the like texts, "It is not of him that willeth, neither of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," that he showeth mercy only to those to whom he had respect from all eternity. *Nay*, but *who replieth against God* now? You now contradict the whole Oracles of God, which declare throughout, "God is no respecter of persons," (Acts x. 34.) "There is no respect of persons with him," (Rom. ii. 11.) Again, from that text, "The children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.—It was said unto her," (unto Rebecca,) "the elder shall serve the younger:" you infer that our being predestinated or elect, no way depends on the foreknowledge of God; flatly contrary to this are all the Scriptures; and those in particular,

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God," 1 Pet. 1, 2. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate," Rom. viii. 29.

21. The Apostle declares, "The same Lord over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him," Rom. x. 12. But you say, "No, he is such only to those for whom Christ died. And those are not all, but only a few, 'whom God hath chosen out of the world;' for he died not for all, but only for those 'who were chosen in him before the foundation of the world,'" Eph. i. 2. Flatly contrary to your interpretation of these Scriptures also is the whole tenor of the New Testament; as are, in particular, those texts, "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15. A clear proof that Christ died, not only for those that are saved, but also for them that perish. He is "the Saviour of the world," John iv. 42. He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," John i. 29. "He is the propitiation, not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 2 John ii. 1. "He," (the living God) "is the Saviour of men," 1 Tim. iv. 10. "He gave himself a ransom for all," 2 Tim. ii. 6. "He tasted death for all men," Heb. ii. 9.

22. If you ask, "Why then are not all men saved?" The whole law and the testimony answer, first, not because of any decree of God, not because it is his pleasure they should die. For, "as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," Ezek. xviii. 32. Whatever be the cause of their perishing, it cannot be his will, if the Oracles of God are true: for they declare, "He is not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. iii. 9. "He willeth that all men should be saved." And they, secondly, declare, what is the cause why all men are not saved; namely, that they will not be saved: so our Lord expressly says, "They will not come unto me that they may have life," John v. 40. "The power of the Lord is present to heal them," but they will not be healed. "They reject the counsel," the merciful counsel of God "*against themselves*," as did their stiff-necked forefathers; and therefore are they without excuse, because God would save them, but they will not be saved: this is the condemnation, "How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not," Matt. xxiii. 37.

23. Thus manifestly does this doctrine tend to overthrow the whole Christian Revelation, by making it contradict itself: by giving such an interpretation of some texts, as flatly contradicts all the other texts; and indeed the whole scope and tenor of Scripture: an abundant proof that it is not of God. But neither is this all; for, seventhly, it is a doctrine full of blasphemy; of such blasphemy as I should dread to mention, but that the honour of our gracious God, and the cause of truth, will not suffer me to be silent. In the cause of God then, and from a sincere concern for the glory of his great name, I will mention a few of the horrible blasphemies contained in this horrible doctrine. But, first, I must warn every one of you that hears, as ye will answer it at the great day, not to charge me, as some have done, with blaspheming, because I mention the blasphemy of others.

And the more you are grieved with them that do thus blaspheme, see that ye "confirm your love towards them" the more, and that your heart's desire and continual prayer to God be, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

24. This premised, let it be observed that this doctrine represents our blessed Lord, "Jesus Christ, the righteous, the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth," as an hypocrite, a deceiver of the people, a man void of common sincerity: for it cannot be denied, that he every where speaks as if he were willing that all men should be saved. Therefore, to say "he was not willing that all men should be saved," is to represent him as a mere hypocrite and dissembler. It cannot be denied that the gracious words which came out of his mouth, are full of invitations to all sinners. To say then, he did not *intend* to save all sinners, is to represent him as a gross deceiver of the people. You cannot deny that he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If then you say he calls those that cannot come, those whom he knows to be unable to come, those whom he can make able to come but will not; how is it possible to describe greater insincerity? You represent him as mocking his helpless creatures, by offering what he never intends to give. You describe him as saying one thing and meaning another; as pretending the love which he had not. Him, in "whose mouth was no guile," you make full of deceit, void of common sincerity; then especially, when drawing nigh the city, "He wept over it, and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together—and ye would not." (ηθελησα και ουκ ηθελησατε·) Now if you say, *they would*, but *he would not*, you represent him, (which who could hear?) as weeping crocodile's tears, over the prey which he himself had doomed to destruction.

25. Such blasphemy this, as one would think might make the ears of a Christian to tingle! But there is yet more behind; for just as it honours the Son, so doth this doctrine honour the Father. It destroys all his attributes at once. It overturns both his justice, mercy, and truth. Yes, it represents the Most Holy God as worse than the devil: as both more false, more cruel, and more unjust. More false, because the devil, liar as he is, hath never said, "He willeth all men to be saved." More unjust, because the devil cannot, if he would, be guilty of such injustice as you ascribe to God, when you say, that God condemned millions of souls to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels for continuing in sin, which, for want of that grace, *he will not* give them, they cannot avoid: and more cruel, because that unhappy spirit "seeketh rest and findeth none;" so that his own restless misery is a kind of temptation to him to tempt others. But God "resteth in his high and holy place:" so that to suppose him out of his mere motion, of his pure will and pleasure, happy as he is, to doom his creatures whether they will or not, to endless misery, is to impute such cruelty to him, as we cannot impute even to the great enemy of God and man. It is to represent the Most

High God, ("he that hath ears to hear, let him hear!") as more cruel, false, and unjust than the devil!!

26. This is the blasphemy clearly contained in *the horrible decree* of predestination. And here I fix my foot. On this I join issue with every asserter of it. You represent God as worse than the devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say, you "will prove it by Scripture." Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? That God is worse than the devil? It cannot be. Whatever that Scripture proves, it never proves this. Whatever be its true meaning, it cannot mean this. Do you ask, "What is its true meaning then?" If I say, "I know not," you have gained nothing. For there are many scriptures, the true sense whereof neither you nor I shall know, till death is swallowed up in victory. But this I know, better it were to say, it had no sense at all, than to say it had such a sense as this. It cannot mean, whatever it mean beside, that the God of truth is a liar. Let it mean what it will, it cannot mean that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No Scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works: (that is, whatever it prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.)

27. This is the blasphemy for which (however I love the persons who assert it,) I abhor the doctrine of predestination: a doctrine upon the supposition of which, if one could possibly suppose it for a moment, (call it election, reprobation, or what you please, for all comes to the same thing) one might say to our adversary the devil, "Thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Thy lying in wait for souls is as needless and useless as our preaching. Hearest thou not, that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands, and that he doth it more effectually? Thou, with all thy principalities and powers, can only so assault that we may resist thee. But he can, irresistibly, destroy both body and soul in hell! Thou canst only entice: but his unchangeable decree, to leave thousands of souls in death, compels them to continue in sin, till they drop into everlasting burnings. Thou temptest; he forceth us to be damned: for we cannot resist his will. Thou fool, why goest thou about any longer, seeking whom thou mayest devour? Hearest thou not that God is the devouring lion, the destroyer of souls, the murderer of men: Moloch caused only children to pass through the fire; and that fire was soon quenched: or the corruptible body being consumed, its torments were at an end. But God, thou art told, by his eternal decree, fixed before they had done good or evil, causes not only *children of a span long*, but the parents also to pass through the fire of hell: that "fire which never shall be quenched;" and the body which is cast thereinto, being now incorruptible and immortal, will be ever consuming and never consumed: but 'the smoke of their torment,' because it is God's good pleasure, 'ascendeth up for ever.'"

28. O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud, and spare not! How would he lift up his voice, and say, "To your tents, O Israel! Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall uttterly perish. But

whither will ye flee?—Into heaven? He is there.—Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee or stay, I call heaven his throne, and earth his footstool, to witness against you, ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice, ye that are under the earth! For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken, and devoted to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Here, O death, is thy sting! They shall not, cannot escape. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Here, O grave, is thy victory! Nations yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil, are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever. Let all those morning-stars sing together, who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning. Let all the sons of hell shout for joy! For the decree is past, and who shall disannul it?"

29. Yea, the decree is past. And so it was before the foundation of the world. But what decree? Even this. "I will set before the sons of men, life and death, blessing and cursing." And "the soul that chooseth life shall live, as the soul that chooseth death shall die." This decree, whereby "whom God did foreknow, he did predestinate," was indeed from everlasting: this, whereby all who suffer Christ to make them alive, are "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of God," now standeth fast, even as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven: and when heaven and earth shall pass away, yet this shall not pass away, for it is as unchangeable and eternal, as the being of God that gave it. This decree yields the strongest encouragement to abound in all good works, and in all holiness: and it is a well-spring of joy, of happiness also, to our great and endless comfort. This is worthy of God. It is, every way, consistent with the perfections of his nature. It gives us the noblest view both of his justice, mercy, and truth. To this agrees the whole scope of the Christian Revelation, as well as all the parts thereof. To this Moses and all the prophets bear witness, and our blessed Lord and all his apostles. Thus Moses, in the name of his Lord, "I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that thou and thy seed may live." Thus Ezekiel, (to cite one prophet for all) "The soul that sinneth it shall die: the son shall not bear [eternally] the iniquity of the father, (xviii. 20.) The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Thus our blessed Lord, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," John vii. 37. (Thus his great Apostle, St. Paul) Acts xvii. 30, "God commandeth all men, every where, to repent." "All men, every where:" every man in every place, without any exception, either of place or person. Thus St. James, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him," James i. 5. Thus St. Peter, "The Lord is—not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Peter, iii. 9. And thus St. John, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the

Father:—and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 1, 2.

30. O hear ye this, ye that forget God! Ye cannot charge your death upon him. "Have I any pleasure at all, that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God? (Ezek. xviii. 23, &c.) Repent, and turn from all your transgressions: so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed,—for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God. Wherefore, turn yourselves, and live ye." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.—Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel!" Ezek. xxviii. 11.

SERMON LVI.

On the DEATH of the Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD: Preached at the Chapel in Tottenham-Court-Road, and at the Tabernacle, near Moorfields, on Sunday, November 18, 1770.

"*Let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his.*"—NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

1. "**LET** my last end be like his!" How many of you join in this wish? Perhaps there are few of you who do not, even in this numerous congregation. And, O that this wish may rest upon your minds!—that it may not die away till your souls also are lodged "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

2. An elaborate exposition of the text will not be expected on this occasion. It would detain you too long from the sadly-pleasing thought of your beloved brother, friend, and pastor; yea, and father too: for how many are here whom he hath "begotten in the Lord?" Will it not then be more suitable to your inclinations, as well as to this solemnity, directly to speak of this man of God, whom you have so often heard speaking in this place? The end of whose conversation ye know, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

And may we not,

I. Observe a few particulars of his life and death.

II. Take some view of his character: And,

III. Inquire how we may improve this awful providence, his sudden removal from us.

1. 1. We may, in the first place, observe a few particulars of his life and death. He was born at Gloucester, in December, 1714, and put to a grammar-school there, when about twelve years old. When he was seventeen, he began to be seriously religious, and served God to the best of his knowledge. About eighteen he removed to the University, and was admitted at Pembroke College in Oxford: and about a year after, he became acquainted with the Methodists, (so called,) whom from that time, he loved as his own soul.

2. By them he was convinced, that we "must be born again," or outward religion will profit us nothing. He joined with them in fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, in visiting the sick and the prisoners, and in gathering up the very fragments of time, that no moment might be lost; and he changed the course of his studies, reading chiefly such books as entered into the heart of religion, and led directly to an experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

3. He was soon tried as with fire. Not only his reputation was lost, and some of his dearest friends forsook him; but he was exercised with inward trials, and those of the severest kind. Many nights he lay sleepless on his bed; many days prostrate on the ground. But after he had groaned several months under "the spirit of bondage," God was pleased to remove the heavy load, by giving him "the Spirit of Adoption," enabling him, through a living faith, to lay hold on "the Son of his Love."

4. However, it was thought needful, for the recovery of his health, which was much impaired, that he should go into the country. He accordingly went to Gloucester, where God enabled him to awaken several young persons. These soon formed themselves into a little society, and were some of the first fruits of his labour. Shortly after, he began to read twice or thrice a week to some poor people in the town, and every day to read to and pray with, the prisoners in the county jail.

5. Being now about twenty-one years of age, he was solicited to enter into Holy Orders. Of this he was greatly afraid, being deeply sensible of his own insufficiency. But the Bishop himself sending for him, and telling him, "Though I had purposed to ordain none under three and twenty, yet I will ordain you whenever you come;" and several other providential circumstances concurring, he submitted, and was ordained on Trinity-Sunday, 1736. The next Sunday he preached to a crowded auditory, in the church wherein he was baptized. The week following, he returned to Oxford, and took his Bachelor's degree: and he was now fully employed, the care of the prisoners and the poor lying chiefly on him.

6. But it was not long before he was invited to London, to serve the cure of a friend going into the country. He continued there two months, lodging in the tower, reading prayers in the chapel twice a week, catechising and preaching once, beside daily visiting the soldiers in the barracks and the infirmary. He also read prayers every evening at Wapping chapel, and preached at Ludgate-prison

every Tuesday. While he was here, letters came from his friends in Georgia, which made him long to go and help them: but not seeing his call clear, at the appointed time he returned to his little charge at Oxford, where several youths met daily at his room, to build up each other in their most holy faith.

7. But he was quickly called from hence again, to supply the cure of Dummer, in Hampshire. Here he read prayers twice a day, early in the morning, and in the evening, after the people came from work. He also daily catechised the children, and visited from house to house. He now divided the day into three parts, allotting eight hours for sleep and meals, eight for study and retirement, and eight for reading prayers, catechising, and visiting the people.—Is there a more excellent way for a servant of Christ and his church? If not, who will "go and do likewise?"

8. Yet his mind still ran on going abroad: and being now fully convinced he was called of God thereto, he set all things in order, and in January, 1737, went down to take leave of his friends in Gloucester. It was in this journey that God began to bless his ministry in an uncommon manner. Wherever he preached, amazing multitudes of hearers flocked together, in Gloucester, in Stonehouse, in Bath, and in Bristol; so that the heat of the churches was scarcely supportable: and the impressions made on the minds of many were no less extraordinary. After his return to London, while he was detained by General Oglethorpe, from week to week, and from month to month, it pleased God to bless his word still more: and he was indefatigable in his labour; generally on Sunday he preached four times, to exceedingly large auditories; beside reading prayers twice or thrice, and walking to and fro ten or twelve miles.

9. On December 28, he left London. It was on the 29th that he first preached without notes. Dec. 30, he went on board; but it was above a month before they cleared the land. One happy effect of their very slow passage, he mentions in April following:—"Blessed be God, we now live very comfortably in the great cabin. We talk of little else but God and Christ: and scarcely a word is heard among us when together, but what has reference to our fall in the first, and our new birth in the second Adam." It seems, likewise, to have been a peculiar providence, that he should spend a little time at Gibraltar; where both citizens and soldiers, high and low, young and old, acknowledged the day of their visitation.

10. From Sunday, May 7, 1738, till the latter end of August following, he "made full proof of his ministry" in Georgia, particularly at Savannah: he read prayers and expounded twice a day, and visited the sick daily. On Sunday he expounded at five in the morning, at ten read prayers and preached, and at three in the afternoon; and at seven in the evening expounded the church catechism. How much easier is it for our brethren in the ministry, either in England, Scotland, or Ireland, to find fault with such a labourer in our Lord's vineyard, than to tread in his steps?

11. It was now that he observed the deplorable condition of many children here; and that God put into his heart the first thought of founding an Orphan-house, for which he determined to raise contributions in England, if God should give him a safe return thither. In December following, he returned to London: and on Sunday, January 14, 1739, he was ordained priest at Christ-church, Oxford. The next day he came to London again; and on Sunday, the 21st, preached twice. But though the churches were large, and crowded exceedingly, yet many hundreds stood in the church-yard, and hundreds more returned home. This put him upon the first thought of preaching in the open air. But when he mentioned it to some of his friends, they judged it to be mere madness. So he did not carry it into execution, till after he had left London. It was on Wednesday, February 21, that finding all the church doors to be shut in Bristol, (beside that, no church was able to contain one half of the congregation,) at three in the afternoon he went to Kingswood, and preached abroad to near two thousand people. On Friday he preached there to four or five thousand; and on Sunday to, it was supposed, ten thousand. The number continually increased all the time he stayed at Bristol: and a flame of holy love was kindled, which will not easily be put out. The same was afterwards kindled in various parts of Wales, of Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire. Indeed, wherever he went, God abundantly confirmed the word of his messenger.

12. On Sunday, April 29, he preached the first time in Moorfields, and on Kennington-Common: and the thousands of hearers were as quiet as they could have been in a church. Being again detained in England from month to month, he made little excursions into several counties, and received the contributions of willing multitudes, for an Orphan-house in Georgia. The embargo which was now laid on the shipping, gave him leisure for more journeys, through various parts of England, for which many will have reason to bless God to all eternity. At length, on Aug. 14, he embarked: but he did not land in Pennsylvania till October 30. Afterwards he went through Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, New-York, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, preaching all along to immense congregations, with full as great effect as in England. On January 10, 1740, he arrived at Savannah.

13. January 29, he added three desolate orphans to near twenty which he had in his house before. The next day he laid out the ground for the house, about ten miles from Savannah. February 11, he took in four orphans more, and set out for Frederica, in order to fetch the orphans that were in the southern parts of the colony. In his return he fixed a school, both for children and grown persons, at Darien, and took four orphans thence. March 25, he laid the first stone of the Orphan-house, to which, with great propriety, he gave the name of Bethesda; a work for which the children yet unborn shall praise the Lord. He had now about forty orphans, so that there were nearly a hundred mouths to be fed daily. But he

was "careful for nothing," casting his care on Him who "feedeth the young ravens that call upon him."

14. In April he made another tour through Pennsylvania, the Jerseys, and New-York. Incredible multitudes flocked to hear, among whom were abundance of negroes. In all places the greater part of the hearers were affected to an amazing degree. Many were deeply convinced of their lost state; many truly converted to God. In some places thousands cried out aloud; many as in the agonies of death; most were drowned in tears; some turned pale as death; others were wringing their hands; others lying on the ground; others sinking into the arms of their friends; almost all lifting up their eyes, and calling for mercy.

15. He returned to Savannah, June 5. The next evening, during the public service, the whole congregation, young and old, were dissolved in tears; after service, several of the parishioners, and all his family, particularly the little children, returned home crying along the street, and some could not help praying aloud. The groans and cries of the children continued all night, and great part of the next day.

16. In August he set out again, and through various provinces came to Boston. While he was here, and in the neighbouring places, he was weak in body. Yet the multitudes of hearers were so great, and the effects wrought on them were so astonishing, as the oldest men then alive in the town had never seen before. The same power attended his preaching at New-York, particularly on Sunday, November 2, almost as soon as he began, crying, weeping, and wailing were to be heard on every side. Many sunk down to the ground, cut to the heart, and many were filled with divine consolation. Toward the close of his journey he made this reflection:—"It is the seventy-fifth day since I arrived at Rhode-Island, exceedingly weak in body: yet God has enabled me to preach a hundred and seventy times in public, beside exhorting frequently in private! Never did God vouchsafe me greater comforts: never did I perform my journeys with less fatigue, or see such a continuance of the divine presence in the congregations to whom I preached." In December he returned to Savannah, and in the March following arrived in England.

17. You may easily observe, that the preceding account is chiefly extracted from his own Journals, which, for their artless and unaffected simplicity, may vie with any writings of the kind. And how exact a specimen is this of his labours both in Europe and America, for the honour of his beloved Master, during the thirty years that followed, as well as of the uninterrupted shower of blessings wherewith God was pleased to succeed his labours! Is it not much to be lamented, that any thing should have prevented his continuing this account, till at least near the time when he was called by his Lord to enjoy the fruit of his labour?—If he has left any papers of this kind, and his friends count me worthy of the honour, it would be my

glory and joy to methodize, transcribe, and prepare them for the public view.

18. A particular account of the last scene of his life, is thus given by a gentleman of Boston :—

"After being about a month with us at Boston and its vicinity, and preaching every day, he went to Old-York, preached there on Thursday, September 27; then proceeded to Portsmouth, and preached there on Friday. On Saturday morning he set out for Boston; but before he came to Newbury, where he had engaged to preach the next morning, he was importuned to preach by the way. The house not being large enough to contain the people, he preached in an open field. But having been infirm for several weeks, this so exhausted his strength, that when he came to Newbury, he could not get out of the ferry-boat without the help of two men. In the evening, however, he recovered his spirits, and appeared with his usual cheerfulness. He went to his chamber at nine, his fixed time, which no company could divert him from; and slept better than he had done for some weeks before. He rose at four in the morning, September 30, and went into his closet; and his companion observed he was unusually long in private. He left his closet, returned to his companion, threw himself on the bed, and lay about ten minutes. Then he fell upon his knees, and prayed most fervently to God, 'That if it were consistent with his will, he might that day finish his Master's work.' He then desired his man to call Mr. Parsons, the clergyman at whose house he was; but, in a minute, before Mr. Parsons could reach him, died without a sigh or groan. On the news of his death, six gentlemen set out for Newbury, in order to bring his remains hither, but he could not be moved, so that his precious ashes must remain at Newbury. Hundreds would have gone from this town to attend his funeral, had they not expected he would have been interred here.—May this stroke be sanctified to the church of God in general, and to this province in particular!"

II. 1. We are, in the Second place, to take some view of his character. A little sketch of this was, soon after, published in the Boston Gazette: an extract of which is subjoined :—

"Little can be said of him, but what every friend to vital Christianity, who has sat under his ministry, will attest. In his public labours he has, for many years, astonished the world with his eloquence and devotion. With what divine pathos did he persuade the impenitent sinner to embrace the practice of piety and virtue! Filled with the Spirit of Grace, he spoke from the heart, and, with a fervency of zeal, perhaps unequalled since the days of the Apostles, adorned the truths he delivered with the most graceful charms of rhetoric and oratory. From the pulpit he was unrivalled in the command of an ever crowded auditory. Nor was he less agreeable and instructive in his private conversation. Happy in a remarkable ease of address, willing to communicate, studious to edify. May the rising generation catch a spark of that flame which shone with

such distinguished lustre in the spirit and practice of this faithful servant of the Most High God!"

2. A more particular, and equally just character of him, has appeared in one of the English papers. It may not be disagreeable to you to add the substance of this likewise:—

"The character of this truly pious person, must be deeply impressed on the heart of every friend to vital religion. In spite of a tender and delicate constitution, he continued, to the last day of his life, preaching with a frequency and fervour that seemed to exceed the natural strength of the most robust. Being called to the exercise of his function at an age, when most young men are only beginning to qualify themselves for it, he had not time to make a very considerable progress in the learned languages. But this defect was amply supplied, by a lively and fertile genius, by fervent zeal, and by a forcible and most persuasive delivery. And though in the pulpit he often found it needful, by 'the terrors of the Lord to persuade men,' he had nothing gloomy in his nature, being singularly cheerful, as well as charitable and tender-hearted. He was as ready to relieve the bodily as the spiritual necessities of those that applied to him. It ought also to be observed, that he constantly enforced upon his audience every moral duty, particularly industry in their several callings, and obedience to their superiors. He endeavoured, by the most extraordinary efforts, of preaching in different places, and even in the open fields, to rouse the lower class of people, from the last degree of inattention and ignorance, to a sense of religion. For this, and his other labours, the name of GEORGE WHITEFIELD, will long be remembered with esteem and veneration."

3. That both these accounts are just and impartial will readily be allowed: that is, as far as they go. But they go little farther than the *outside* of his character. They show you the *preacher*, but not the *man*, the *Christian*, the *Saint* of God. May I be permitted to add a little on this head, from a personal knowledge of near forty years? Indeed, I am thoroughly sensible how difficult it is to speak on so delicate a subject; what prudence is required to avoid both extremes, to say neither too little, nor too much. Nay, I know it is impossible to speak at all, to say either less or more, without incurring from some the former, from others the latter censure. Some will seriously think, that too little is said; and others, that it is too much. But without attending to this, I will speak just what I know, before Him to whom we are all to give an account.

4. Mention has already been made of his unparalleled *zeal*, his indefatigable *activity*, his *tender-heartedness* to the afflicted, and *charitableness* toward the poor. But should we not likewise mention his deep *gratitude*, to all whom God had used as instruments of good to him? Of whom he did not cease to speak in the most respectful manner, even to his dying day. Should we not mention, that he had a heart susceptible of the most generous and tender *friendship?* I have frequently thought, that this, of all others, was the distinguishing part of his character. How few have we known of so kind a

temper, of such large and flowing affections? Was it not principally by this, that the hearts of others were so strangely drawn and knit to him? Can any thing but love beget love? This shone in his very countenance, and continually breathed in all his words, whether in public or private. Was it not this, which, quick and penetrating as lightning, flew from heart to heart? Which gave that life to his Sermons, his Conversations, his Letters? Ye are witnesses.

5. But away with the vile misconstruction of men of corrupt minds, who know of no love but what is "earthly and sensual." Be it remembered, at the same time, that he was endued with the most nice and unblemished *modesty*. His office called him to converse very frequently and largely, with women as well as men; and those of every age and condition. But his whole behaviour toward them, was a practical comment on that advice of St. Paul to Timothy, "Entreat the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity."

6. Meantime how suitable to the friendliness of his spirit, was the *frankness* and *openness* of his conversation? although he was as far removed from rudeness on the one hand, as from guile and disguise on the other. Was not this frankness, at once, a fruit and a proof of his *courage* and *intrepidity?* Armed with these, he feared not the faces of men, but "used great plainness of speech" to persons of every rank and condition, high and low, rich and poor: endeavouring only, "by manifestation of the truth, to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

7. Neither was he afraid of labour or pain, any more than of "what man could do unto him," being equally

> "*Patient* in bearing ill and doing well."

And this appeared in the *steadiness* wherewith he pursued whatever he undertook for his Master's sake. Witness one instance for all, the Orphan-House in Georgia, which he began and perfected, in spite of all discouragements. Indeed, in whatever concerned himself, he was pliant and flexible. In this case he was "easy to be entreated," easy to be either convinced or persuaded. But he was immoveable in the things of God, or wherever his conscience was concerned. None could persuade, any more than affright him, to vary, in the least point, from that *integrity*, which was inseparable from his whole character, and regulated all his words and actions. Herein he did

> "Stand as an iron pillar strong,
> And steadfast as a wall of brass."

8. If it be inquired, What was the foundation of this integrity, or of his sincerity, courage, patience, and every other valuable and amiable quality; it is easy to give the answer. It was not the excellence of his natural temper:—not the strength of his understanding: It was not the force of education; no, nor the advice of his friends. It was

no other than faith in a bleeding Lord: "Faith of the operation of God." It was "a lively hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It was "the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, which was given unto him," filling his soul with tender, disinterested love to every child of man. From this source arose that torrent of *Eloquence* which frequently bore down all before it. From this, that astonishing force of *Persuasion* which the most hardened sinners could not resist. This it was which often made his "head as waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears." This it was, which enabled him to pour out his soul in *Prayer*, in a manner peculiar to himself, with such fulness and ease united together, with such strength and variety both of sentiment and expression.

9. I may close this head with observing, What an honour it pleased God to put upon his faithful servant, by allowing him to declare his everlasting gospel in so many various countries, to such numbers of people, and with so great an effect, on so many of their precious souls! Have we read or heard of any person since the Apostles, who testified the gospel of the grace of God, through so widely extended a space, through so large a part of the habitable world? Have we read or heard of any person, who called so many thousands, so many myriads of sinners to repentance? Above all, have we read or heard of any, who has been a blessed instrument, in his hand, of bringing so many sinners from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?" It is true, were we to talk thus to the gay world, we should be judged to *speak as barbarians.* But *you* understand the language of the country to which you are going, and whither our dear friend is gone a little before us.

III. But how shall we improve this awful Providence? This is the third thing which we have to consider. And the answer to this important question is easy: (may God write it in all our hearts!) By keeping close to the *grand doctrines* which he delivered: and by drinking into his *spirit.*

1. And first, let us keep close to the grand scriptural doctrines which he every where delivered. There are many doctrines of a less essential nature, with regard to which, even the sincere children of God, (such is the present weakness of human understanding!) are, and have been divided for many ages. In these we may think and let think; we may "agree to disagree." But meantime let us hold fast the essentials of "the faith, which was once delivered to the saints;" and which this champion of God so strongly insisted on, at all times, and in all places.

2. His fundamental point was, give God all the glory of whatever is good in man. And in the business of salvation, set Christ as high and man as low as possible. With this point, he, and his friends at Oxford, the original Methodists, so called, set out. Their grand principle was, there is *no power* by nature, and *no merit* in man. They insisted, all power to think, speak, or act aright, is in and from the Spirit of Christ: and all merit is (not in man, how high soever in

grace, but merely) in the blood of Christ. So he and they taught: There is no power in man, till it is given him from above, to do one good work, to speak one good word, or to form one good desire. For it is not enough to say, all men are *sick of sin:* No, we are all "DEAD in trespasses and sins." It follows, that all the children of men are, "by nature, children of wrath." We are all "guilty before God," liable to death temporal and eternal.

3. And we are all helpless, both with regard to the power and to the guilt of sin. For "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" None less than the Almighty. Who can raise those that are *dead*, spiritually dead in sin? None but HE who raised us from the dust of the earth. But on what consideration will he do this? "Not for works of righteousness that we have done." "The dead cannot praise thee, O Lord;" nor do any thing for the sake of which they should be raised to life. Whatever, therefore, God does, he does it merely for the sake of his well-beloved Son: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." "He himself bore all our sins in his own body upon the tree." "He was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification." Here then is the sole *meritorious cause* of every blessing we do or can enjoy. In particular of our pardon and acceptance with God, of our full and free justification. But by what mean do we become interested in what Christ has done and suffered? "Not by works, lest any man should boast;" but by faith alone. "We conclude," says the Apostle, "that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law." And "to as many as thus receive Him, giveth he power to become the sons of God: Even to those that believe in his Name, who are born, not of the will of man, but of God."

4. And "except a man be" thus "born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But all who are thus "born of the Spirit," have "the kingdom of God within them." Christ sets up his kingdom in their hearts; "Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." That "mind is in them, which was in Christ Jesus," enabling them to "walk as Christ also walked." His indwelling Spirit makes them both holy in heart, and "holy in all manner of conversation." But still, seeing all this is a free gift, through the righteousness and blood of Christ, there is eternally the same reason to remember, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

5. You are not ignorant, that these are the fundamental doctrines which he every where insisted on. And may they not be summed up, as it were, in two words, "The new birth," and "justification by faith?" These let us insist upon with all boldness, at all times, and in all places: in public, (those of us who are called thereto,) and at all opportunities, in private. Keep close to these good, old, unfashionable doctrines, how many soever contradict and blaspheme. Go on, my brethren, in the "name of the Lord, and in the power of his might." With all care and diligence, "keep that safe which is committed to your trust:" knowing that "heaven and earth shall pass away: but this truth shall not pass away."

6. But will it be sufficient to keep close to his doctrines, how pure soever they are? Is there not a point of still greater importance than this, namely, to drink into his Spirit? Herein to *be a follower of him, even as* he was *of Christ?* Without this, the purity of our doctrines would only increase our condemnation. This, therefore, is the principal thing, to copy after his spirit. And allowing that in some points, we must be content, to *admire* what we cannot *imitate;* yet in many others we may, through the same grace, be partakers of the same blessing. Conscious, then, of your own wants, and of his bounteous love, who "giveth liberally and upbraideth not," cry to him that worketh all in all, for a measure of the same precious faith; of the same zeal and activity, the same tender-heartedness, charitableness, bowels of mercies. Wrestle with God for some degree of the same grateful, friendly, affectionate temper, of the same openness, simplicity, and godly sincerity, "love without dissimulation." Wrestle on, till the power from on high works in you the same steady courage and patience; and above all, because it is the crown of all, the same invariable integrity.

7. Is there any other fruit of the grace of God, with which he was eminently endowed, and the want of which, among the children of God, he frequently and passionately lamented? There is one, that is, *Catholic love.* That sincere and tender affection, which is due to all those, who, we have reason to believe, are the children of God by faith. In other words, all those, in every persuasion, who "fear God and work righteousness." He longed to see all who had "tasted of the good word," of a truly *catholic spirit,* (a word little understood and still less experienced by many, who have it frequently in their mouths.) Who is he that answers this character? Who is a man of a *catholic spirit?* One who loves as friends, as brethren in the Lord, as joint partakers of the present kingdom of heaven, and fellow-heirs of his eternal kingdom, all, of whatever opinion, mode of worship, or congregation, who believe in the Lord Jesus: who, love God and man; who rejoicing to please, and fearing to offend God, are careful to abstain from evil, and zealous of good works. He is a man of a truly *catholic spirit,* who bears all these continually upon his heart; who, having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and an earnest desire of their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men: who speaks comfortably to them, and labours, by all his words, to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power, in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready "to spend and be spent" for them; yea, "to lay down his life for his brethren."

8. How amiable a character is this! How desirable to every child of God! But why is it then so rarely found? How is it that there are so few instances of it? Indeed, supposing we have tasted of the love of God, how can any of us rest, till it is our own? Why, there is a delicate device, whereby Satan persuades thousands, that they may stop short of it, and yet be guiltless. It is well, if many

here present are not in this "snare of the devil, taken captive at his will." "O yes," says one, "I have all this love for those I believe to be the children of God. But I will never believe, he is a child of God, who belongs to that *vile congregation!* Can he, do you think, be a child of God, who holds such *detestable opinions?* or he that joins in such senseless and superstitious, if not idolatrous worship?" So we may justify ourselves in one sin, by adding a second to it! We excuse the want of love in ourselves, by laying the blame on others. To colour our own devilish temper, we pronounce our brethren children of the devil. O beware of this! And if you are already taken in the snare, escape out of it as soon as possible. Go and learn that truly catholic love, which "is not rash or hasty" in judging:—that love which "thinketh no evil," which "believeth and hopeth all things;"—which makes all allowances for others, that we desire others should make for us. Then we shall take knowledge of the grace of God, which is in every man, whatever be his opinion or mode of worship. Then will all that fear God be near and dear unto us, "in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

9. Was not this the spirit of our dear friend? And why should it not be ours? O thou God of love, how long shall thy people be a by-word among the heathen? How long shall they laugh us to scorn, and say, "See how these Christians love one another?" When wilt thou roll away our reproach? "Shall the sword devour for ever? How long will it be, ere thou bid thy people to return from following each other?" Now, at least, "let all the people stand still, and pursue after their brethren no more!" But whatever others do, let all of us, my brethren, hear the voice of him that being dead, yet speaketh! Suppose you hear him say, "Now, at least, 'be ye followers of me as I was of Christ!' Let brother 'no more lift up sword against brother, neither know ye war any more!' Rather 'put ye on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, humbleness of mind, brotherly kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.' Let the time past suffice for strife, envy, contention; for 'biting and devouring one another.' Blessed be God, that ye have not long ago been 'consumed one of another!' From henceforth hold ye 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'"

10. O God, with thee no word is impossible! Thou dost whatsoever pleaseth thee! O that thou wouldst cause the mantle of thy Prophet, whom thou hast taken up, now to fall on us that remain! "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" *Let* his *spirit rest upon* these thy servants! Show thou art the God that *answerest by fire!* Let the fire of thy love fall on every heart! And because we love thee, let us love one another with a "love stronger than death" Take away from us "all anger, and wrath, and bitterness; all clamour and evil speaking." Let thy Spirit so rest upon us, that from this hour, we may be "kind to each other, tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us!"

HYMN.

1 SERVANT of God, well done!
Thy glorious warfare's past,
The battle's fought, the race is won,
And thou art crown'd at last;
Of all thy heart's desire
Triumphantly possest,
Lodg'd by the ministerial choir
In thy Redeemer's breast.

2 In condescending love,
Thy ceaseless prayer He heard,
And bade thee suddenly remove
To thy complete reward:
Ready to bring the peace,
Thy beauteous feet were shod,
When mercy sign'd thy soul's release,
And caught thee up to God.

3 With saints enthron'd on high,
Thou dost thy Lord proclaim,
And still *To God Salvation* cry,
Salvation to the Lamb!
O happy, happy soul!
In ecstasies of praise,
Long as eternal ages roll,
Thou seest thy Saviour's face.

4 Redeem'd from earth and pain,
Ah! when shall we ascend,
And all in JESU's presence reign
With our translated friend!
Come, Lord, and quickly come!
And, when in Thee complete,
Receive thy longing servants home,
To triumph—at thy feet!

SERMON LVII.

On the Occasion of the Death of the Rev. Mr. John Fletcher.

"*Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the end of that Man is peace.*"—Psalm xxxvii. 37.

IN the preceding verses taken together with this, there is a beautiful contrast, between the death of a wicked and that of a good man. "I myself," says the Psalmist, "have seen the ungodly in great power, and flourishing like a green bay-tree. I went by, and, lo! he was gone: I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found." Dost thou desire to be found happy, both in life and in death? Then "keep innocency, and take heed unto the thing that is right: for that shall bring a man peace at the last." The words are rendered in the New Translation with far more force and elegance. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." It is not improbable, that David, while he uttered these words, had a particular instance before his eyes. Such an instance was that of the great and good man, whom God has not long ago taken to himself.

In discoursing on these words, I purpose, First, briefly to inquire, Who is the person here spoken of, "the perfect, the upright Man?" I will endeavour, Secondly, To explain the promise, "That shall bring a man peace at the last:" or, as it is expressed in the other version, "The end of that man is peace." I will, then, with the divine assistance, show a little more at large, in how glorious a manner this was fulfilled in the end of that "perfect and upright man," who has been lately removed from us.

I. 1. I am, First, briefly to inquire, Who is the person that is here spoken of, "The upright and perfect man?" In speaking on this head, I shall not endeavour to describe the character of an upright Jew: such as David himself was, or any of those holy men that lived under the Mosaic dispensation: it more nearly imports us to consider such an upright man, as are those that live under the Christian dispensation, such as have lived and died since "life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel."

2. In this sense, he is a perfect and upright man, who believes in the name of the Son of God: he is one in whom it has pleased the Father, to reveal the Son of his Love: and who, consequently, is able to declare, "The life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He is one that finds "the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is a child of

God :" and unto whom " Jesus Christ is made of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

3. This faith will, undoubtedly, " work by love." Accordingly every Christian believer has " the love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." And loving God, he loves his brother also : his good-will extends to every child of man. By this, as well as by the fruits of love, lowliness, meekness, and resignation, he shows that there is the same "mind in him which was in Christ Jesus."

4. As to his outward behaviour, the upright Christian believer is blameless and irreproachable. He is holy, as Christ that hath called him is holy, in all manner of conversation: ever labouring to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man. He not only avoids all outward sin, but " abstains from all appearance of evil." He steadily walks in all the public and private ordinances of the Lord blameless. He is zealous of good works : as he hath time, doing good, in every kind and degree, to all men. And in the whole course of his life, he pursues one invariable rule, whether he eat or drink, or whatever he does, to do all to the glory of God.

II. And surely " the end of that man is peace :" the meaning of which words we are now, in the second place, to consider.

I do not conceive this immediately to refer to that glorious peace, which is prepared for him in the presence of God to all eternity ; but rather to that which he will enjoy in the present world, before his spirit returns to God that gave it. Neither does it seem directly to refer to outward peace, or deliverance from outward trouble ; although it is true, many good men, who had been long buffeted by adversity, and troubled on every side, have experienced an entire deliverance from it, and enjoyed a remarkable calm before they went hence. But this seems chiefly to refer to inward peace, even that " peace of God which passeth all understanding." Therefore, it is no wonder, that it cannot be fully and adequately expressed in human language. We can only say, it is an unspeakable calmness and serenity of spirit, a tranquillity in the blood of Christ, which keeps the souls of believers, in their latest hour, even as a garrison keeps a city; which keeps not only their hearts, all their passions and affections, but also their minds, all the motions of their understanding and imagination, and all the workings of their reason, in Christ Jesus. This peace they experienced in a higher or lower degree, (suppose they continued in the faith,) from the time they first found redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins. But when they have nearly finished their course, it generally flows as a river, even in such a degree, as it had not entered into their hearts to conceive. A remarkable instance of this, out of a thousand, occurred many years ago. Enoch Williams, one of the first of our Preachers that was stationed at Cork, (who had received this peace when he was eleven years old, and had never lost it for an hour,) after he had rejoiced in God with joy unspeakable, during the whole course of his illness, was too much exhausted to speak many words, but just said, " Peace ! Peace !" and died.

III. So was the scripture fulfilled. But it was far more gloriously

fulfilled in that late eminent servant of God; as will appear if we consider a few circumstances, first, of his life, and secondly, of his triumphant death.

1. Indeed we have, as yet, but a very imperfect knowledge of his life. We know little more of his early years, than that he was from his infancy so remarkably regardless of food, that he would scarce take enough to sustain life; and that he had always much of the fear of God, and a real sense of religion. He was born September 12, in the year 1729, at Nyon, in Switzerland, of a very reputable family. He went through the usual course of academical studies, in the University of Geneva. One of his uncles who was, at that time a general officer in the imperial service, then invited him into the same service, promising to procure him a commission. But just as he came into Germany, the war was at an end. Being so far on his way, he was then invited into Holland, by another uncle, who had, a little before, been desired, by a correspondent in England, to procure a tutor for a gentleman's sons. He asked Mr. Fletcher whether he were willing to go into England, and undertake this office? He consented, and accordingly went over to England, and took the care of Mr. Hill's two sons, at Tern-Hall in Shropshire: and he continued in that office, till the young gentlemen went to the University.

2. When Mr. Hill went to London, to attend the Parliament, he took his lady and Mr. Fletcher with him. While they were dining at St. Alban's, he walked out into the town, but did not return, till the coach was set out for London. However, a saddle-horse being left, he came after, and overtook them the same evening. Mrs. Hill asked him, "Why he stayed behind?" he said "I was walking through the market place, and I heard a poor old woman talk so sweetly of Jesus Christ, that I knew not how the time passed away." "I will be hanged," said Mrs. Hill, "if our tutor does not turn Methodist by and by!" "Methodist, Madam," said he, "pray what is that?" She replied, "Why, the Methodists are a people that do nothing but pray. They are praying all day and all night." "Are they?" said he "Then with the help of God, I will find them out, if they be above ground." He did, not long after, find them out, and had his desire, being admitted into the society. While he was in town he met in Mr. Edwards' class, and lost no opportunity of meeting. And he retained a peculiar regard for Mr. Edwards to the day of his death.

3. It was not long before he was pressed in spirit, to call sinners to repentance. Seeing the world all around him lying in wickedness, he found an earnest desire,

> "To pluck poor brands out of the fire,
> To snatch them from the verge of hell."

And though he was yet far from being perfect in the English tongue, particularly with regard to the pronunciation of it, yet the earnestness with which he spake, seldom to be seen in England, and the unspeakable tender affection which breathed in every word and

gesture, to poor, lost sinners, made so deep an impression on all that heard, that very few went empty away.

4. About the year 1753, (being now of a sufficient age) he was ordained deacon and priest, and soon after presented to the little living at Madeley, in Shropshire. This, he had frequently said, was the only living which he ever desired to have. He was ordained at Whitehall, and the same day, being informed that I had no one to assist me at West-Street Chapel, he came away as soon as ever the ordination was over, and assisted me in the administration of the Lord's Supper. And he was now doubly diligent in preaching, not only in the Chapels of West-Street and Spitalfields, but wherever the Providence of God opened a door to proclaim the everlasting Gospel. This he did frequently in French, (as well as in English,) of which all judges allowed him to be a complete master.

5. Hence he removed into the Vicarage-House at Madeley. Here he was fully employed among his parishioners, both in the town and in Madeley-Wood, a mile or two from it, a place much resembling Kingswood, almost wholly inhabited by poor Colliers, and their numerous families. These forlorn ones, (little wiser than the beasts that perish,) he took great pains to reform and instruct. And they are now as judicious and as well-behaved a people, as most of their station in the three kingdoms.

6. But some time after, he was prevailed upon by the Countess of Huntingdon, occasionally to quit his beloved retreat, and visit Wales, in order to superintend her school at Trevecka. This he did, with all his power, instructing the young men, chiefly in experimental and practical Divinity: till he received a letter from the Countess, in which, her ladyship declared, that all who did not absolutely renounce those eight propositions, which were contained in the Minutes of the Conference, for 1770, must immediately leave her house. Mr. Fletcher was exceedingly surprised at this peremptory declaration. He spent the next day in fasting and prayer, and in the evening wrote to her Ladyship, that he not only could not utterly renounce, but must entirely approve of all those eight propositions, and therefore had obeyed her order, by leaving her house, and returning to his own at Madeley. A little after this the Circular Letter appeared, signed by Mr. Shirley, summoning all that feared God, in England, to meet together at Bristol, at the time of the Methodist Conference, "in order to bear testimony against the dreadful heresy contained in the Minutes of the preceding Conference."

7. That circular letter was the happy occasion of his writing those excellent *Checks to Antinomianism*, in which one knows not which to admire most, the purity of the language, (such as a foreigner scarcely ever wrote before,) the strength and clearness of the argument, or the mildness and sweetness of the spirit, which breathes throughout the whole. Insomuch that I nothing wonder at a Clergyman that was resolved never to part with his dear decrees, who being pressed to read them, replied, "No, I will never read Mr.

Fletcher's Writings; for if I did, I should be of his mind." He now, likewise, wrote several other valuable tracts. Meantime, he was more abundant in his ministerial labours, both in public and private, visiting his whole parish, early and late, in all weathers, regarding neither heat nor cold, rain nor snow, whether he was on horseback or on foot. But this insensibly weakened his constitution, and sapped the foundation of his health; which was still more effectually done, by his intense and uninterrupted studies: at which he frequently continued with scarce any intermission, fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen hours a day. Meantime, he did not allow himself necessary food: he seldom took any regular meals, unless he had company; but twice or thrice in four and twenty hours, ate some bread and cheese, or fruit: instead of which he took a draught of milk, and then wrote again.

8. Being informed that his health was greatly impaired, I judged nothing was so likely to restore it as a long journey. So I proposed his taking a journey with me into Scotland, to which he willingly consented. We set out in spring, and after travelling eleven or twelve hundred miles, returned to London in autumn. I verily believe, had he travelled with me a few months longer, he would have quite recovered his health. But, being stopped by his friends, he quickly relapsed, and fell into a true pulmonary consumption.

9. But this sickness was not unto death. It was only sent that the glory of the Lord might appear. For upwards of four months he resided at Newington, and was visited by persons of all ranks. And they all marvelled at the grace of God that was in him. In all his pain, no complaint came out of his mouth: but his every breath was spent, either in praising God, or exhorting and comforting his neighbour.

10. When nothing else availed, he was advised to take a journey by sea and by land into his own country. He did this, in company with Mr. Ireland, a well tried and faithful friend, who loved him as a brother, and thought no pains ill bestowed, if he could preserve so valuable a life. He remained partly in the south of France, and partly in his own country upwards of three years, and was a blessing to all that were round about him. Being much recovered, in the summer of 1781, he returned in good health to Madeley.

11. In the month of November of that year, with the full approbation of all his friends, he married Miss Bosanquet: of whom, as she is still alive, I say no more at present, than that she was the only person in England, whom I judged to be worthy of Mr. Fletcher. By her tender and judicious care, his health was confirmed more and more. And I am firmly convinced that had he used this health, in travelling all over the kingdom, five, or six, or seven months every year, (for which never was man more eminently qualified; no, not Mr. Whitefield himself,) he would have done more good than any other man in England. I cannot doubt but this would have been the more excellent way. However, though he did not accept of this honour, he did abundance of good in that narrower

sphere of action which he chose: and was a pattern well worthy the imitation of all the parochial ministers in the kingdom.

12. His manner of life during the time that he and his wife lived together, it may be most satisfactory to give in her own words.

"It is no little grief to me, that my dearly beloved husband has left no account of himself in writing. And I am not able to give many particulars of a life the most angelical I have ever known.

"He was born at Nyon, in the Canton of Berne in Switzerland. In his infancy he discovered a lively genius, and great tenderness of heart. One day, having offended his father, who threatened to correct him, he kept himself at a distance in the garden, till seeing his father approach, and fearing his anger would be renewed by the sight of him, he ran away. But he was presently struck with deep remorse, thinking, 'What! Do I run away from my father? What a wicked wretch! It may be I may live to grow up, and have a son that will run away from me!' And it was some years before the impression of sorrow, then made upon him, wore off.

"When he was about seven years old, he was reproved by his nurse maid, saying, 'You are a naughty boy, and the devil takes all such.' After he was in bed, he began to reflect on her words, his heart smote him, and he said, 'I am a naughty boy, and perhaps God will let the devil fetch me away.' He got upon the bed, and for a considerable time, wrestled with God in prayer, till he felt such a sense of the love of God, as made him quite easy.

[Part of the next paragraph I omit, being nearly the same with what I inserted before.]

"When he entered Mr. Hill's family, he did not know Christ in his heart. One Sunday evening, as he was writing some music, the servant came in to make up the fire, and looking at him, said, 'Sir, I am very sorry to see you so employed on the Lord's-day.' He immediately put away his music, and, from that hour, became a strict observer of that holy day.

"Not long after, he met with a person, who asked him to go with her and hear the Methodists. He readily consented. The more he heard, the more uneasy he grew: and doubling his diligence, he hoped by *doing much* to render himself acceptable to God: till one day hearing Mr. Green, he was convinced he did not know what true faith was. This occasioned many reflections in his mind. 'Is it possible (said he) that I who have made Divinity my study, and have received the *premium of piety* (so called, from the University) for my writings on divine subjects; that I should still be so ignorant, as not to know what Faith is?' But the more he examined, the more he was convinced: then sin revived, and hope died away. He now sought, by the most rigorous austerities, to conquer an evil nature, and bring heaven-born peace into his soul. But the more he struggled, the more he was convinced, that all his fallen soul was sin, and that nothing but a revelation of the love of Jesus, could make him a Christian. For this he groaned with unwearied assiduity: till one day, after much wrestling with God, lying prostrate on his face be-

fore the throne, he felt the application of the blood of Jesus. Now his bonds were broken, and his free soul began to breathe a pure air. Sin was beneath his feet, and he could triumph in the Lord, the God of his salvation.

"From this time he walked valiantly in the ways of God; and thinking he had not leisure enough in the day, he made it a constant rule, to sit up two nights in a week, for reading, prayer, and meditation, in order to sink deeper into that communion with God, which was become his soul's delight. Meantime, he took only vegetable food, and for above six months, lived wholly on bread, with milk and water.

"Notwithstanding the nights he sat up, he made it a rule, never to sleep, as long as he could possibly keep awake. For this purpose, he always took a candle and book to bed with him. But one night, being overcome of sleep, before he had put out the candle, he dreamed his curtains, pillow, and cap, were on fire, without doing him any harm. And so it was. In the morning, part of his curtains, pillow, and cap, were burnt. But not a hair of his head was singed. So did God give his angels charge over him!

"Some time after, he was favoured with a particular manifestation of the love of God: so powerful, that it appeared to him, as if body and soul would be separated. Now all his desires centred in one, that of devoting himself to the service of his precious Master. This he thought he could do best by entering into Orders. God made his way plain, and he soon after settled in Madeley. He received this parish as from the immediate hand of God, and unweariedly laboured therein, and in the adjacent places, till he had spent himself in his Master's service, and was ripening fast for glory. Much opposition he met with for many years, and often his life was in danger. Sometimes he was inwardly constrained to warn obstinate sinners, that if they did not repent, the hand of God would cut them off. And the event proved the truth of the prediction. But, nowithstanding all their opposition, many were the seals of his ministry.

"He had an earnest desire that the pure gospel should remain among his people, after he was taken away. For this purpose he surmounted great difficulties in building a house in Madeley Wood. He had not only saved for it the last farthing he had, but when he was abroad, proposed to let the Vicarage-House, (designing at his return to live in a little cottage near it) and appropriate the rent of it for clearing that house.

"Since the time I had the honour and happiness of living with him, every day made me more sensible of the mighty work of the Spirit upon him. The fruits of this were manifest in all his life and conversation, but in nothing more than in his meekness and humility. It was a meekness which no affront could move: a humility which loved to be unknown, forgotten, and despised.* How hard is it to find an eminent person who loves an equal? But his delight was in

* I think this was going to an extreme.

preferring others to himself. It appeared so natural in him, that it seemed as his meat, to set every one before himself. He spoke not of the fault of an absent person, but when necessary; and then with the utmost caution. He made no account of his own labours, and perhaps carried to an extreme his dislike of hearing them mentioned.

"Patience is the daughter of humility. In him it discovered itself in a manner which I wish I could either describe or imitate. It produced in him a ready mind to embrace every cross with alacrity and pleasure. And for the good of his neighbour, (the poor in particular,) nothing seemed hard, nothing wearisome. When I have been grieved to call him out of his study, from his closet-work, two or three times an hour, he would answer, 'O my dear, never think of that: it matters not what we do, so we are always ready to meet the will of God: it is only conformity to this which makes any employment excellent.'

"He had a singular love for the lambs of the flock, the children, and applied himself with the greatest diligence to their instruction, for which he had a peculiar gift: and this populous parish found him full exercise for it. The poorest met with the same attention from him as the rich. For their sakes he almost grudged himself necessaries, and often expressed a pain in using them, while any of his parish wanted them.

"But while I mention his meekness and love, let me not forget the peculiar favour of his Master in giving him the most firm and resolute *courage*. In reproving sin and open sinners, he was a *Son of Thunder*, and regarded neither fear nor favour, when he had a message from God to deliver.

"With respect to his communion with God, it is much to be lamented that we have no account of it from his own pen. But thus far I can say, it was his constant care, to keep an uninterrupted sense of the divine presence. In order to this he was slow of speech, and had the exactest government of his words. To this he was so inwardly attentive, as sometimes to appear stupid to those who knew him not: though few conversed in a more lively manner, when he judged it would be for the glory of God. It was his continued endeavour to draw up his own and every other spirit, to an immediate intercourse with God. And all his intercourse with me was so mingled with prayer and praise, that every employment and every meal, was, as it were, perfumed therewith. He often said, 'It is a little thing so to hang upon God by faith, as to feel no departure from him. But I want to be filled with the fulness of his Spirit.' 'I feel,' said he, 'sometimes such gleams of light, as it were wafts of heavenly air, as seem ready to take my soul with them to glory.' A little before his last illness, when the fever began to rage among us, he preached a sermon on the duty of visiting the sick, wherein he said, 'What do you fear? Are you afraid of catching the distemper, and dying? O fear it no more! What an honour to die in your Master's work! If permitted to me, I should account it a singular favour.' In his former illness he wrote thus, 'I calmly wait in unshaken resignation, for the full salvation of God; ready to venture

on his faithful love, and on the sure mercies of David. His time is best, and is my time: Death has lost its sting. And I bless God, I know not what hurry of spirits is, or unbelieving fears.'

"For some months past, he scarcely ever lay down or rose up without these words in his mouth,

'I nothing have, I nothing am,
My treasure's in the bleeding Lamb,
Both now and evermore.'

"In one of his letters which he wrote some time since to his dear people at Madeley, some of his words are, 'I leave this blessed island for awhile; but, I trust, I shall never leave the kingdom of God,—the shadow of Christ's cross,—the clefts of the Rock, smitten and pierced for us. There I meet you in spirit: thence, I trust, I shall joyfully leap into the ocean of eternity, to go and join those ministering spirits, who wait on the heirs of salvation. And if I am no more allowed to minister to you on earth, I rejoice at the thought that I shall perhaps be allowed to accompany the angels, who, if you abide in the faith, will be commissioned to carry you into Abraham's bosom.'

"The thought enlivens my faith! Lord, give me to walk in his steps! Then shall I see him again, and my heart shall rejoice, and we shall eternally behold the Lamb together. Faith brings near the welcome moment! And now he beckons me away, and Jesus bids me come!"

I know not that any thing can or need be added to this, but Mrs. Fletcher's Account of his Death, which follows also in her own words.

"For some time before his late illness, he was particularly penetrated with the nearness of eternity. There was scarcely an hour in which he was not calling upon us to drop every thought and every care, that we might attend to nothing but drinking deeper into God. We spent much time in wrestling with God, and were led in a peculiar manner to abandon our whole selves into the hands of God, to do or suffer whatever was pleasing to him.

"On Thursday, Aug. 4, he was employed in the work of God, from three in the afternoon till nine at night. When he came home, he said, "I have taken cold." On Friday and Saturday he was not well, but seemed uncommonly drawn out in prayer. On Saturday night his fever appeared very strong. I begged him not to go to church in the morning: but he told me, 'It was the will of the Lord;' in which case I never dared to persuade. In reading prayers he almost fainted away. I got through the crowd, and entreated him to come out of the desk. But he let me and others know in his sweet manner, that we were not to interrupt the order of God. I then retired to my pew, where all around me were in tears. When he was a little refreshed by the windows being opened, he went on with a strength and recollection that surprised us all.

"After sermon he went to the Communion Table with these

words, 'I am going to throw myself under the wings of the Cherubim, before the Mercy-seat.' The service held till near two. Sometimes he could scarcely stand, and was often obliged to stop. The people were deeply affected: weeping was on every side. Gracious Lord! How was it my soul was kept so calm in the midst of the most tender feelings? Notwithstanding his extreme weakness, he gave out several verses of hymns, and lively sentences of exhortation. When service was over, we hurried him to bed, where he immediately fainted away. He afterward dropped into a sleep for some time, and, on waking, cried out with a pleasant smile, 'Now, my dear, thou seest I am no worse for doing the Lord's work: he never fails me when I trust in him.' Having got a little dinner, he dozed most of the evening, now and then waking full of the praises of God. At night his fever returned, though not violent; but his strength decreased amazingly. On Monday and Tuesday we had a little paradise together: he lay on a couch in the study, and, though often changing posture, was sweetly pleasant, and frequently slept a good while. When awake, he delighted in hearing me read hymns and tracts on Faith and Love. His words were all animating, and his patience beyond expression. When he had any nauseous medicines to take, he seemed to enjoy the cross, according to a word he used often to repeat, that we are to seek a perfect conformity to the will of God, and leave him to give us what comfort he sees good. I asked him, whether he had any advice to leave me, if he should be taken from me? He replied, 'I have nothing particular to say, the Lord will open all before thee.' I said, 'Have you any conviction that God is about to take you?' He said, 'No, not in particular; only I always see death so inexpressibly near, that we both seem to stand on the verge of eternity.' While he slept a little, I besought the Lord, if it were his good pleasure, to spare him to me a little longer: but my prayer seemed to have no wings, and I could not help mingling continually therewith, 'Lord, give me perfect resignation.' This uncertainty made me tremble, lest God was going to put into my hand the bitter cup, with which he lately threatened my husband. Some weeks before, I myself was ill of the fever. My husband then felt the whole parting scene, and struggled for perfect resignation. He said, 'O Polly, shall I ever see the day when thou must be carried out to be buried? How will the little things which thy tender care has prepared for me in every part of the house, how will they wound and distress me? How is it? I think I feel jealousy! I am jealous of the worms. I seem to shrink at giving my dear Polly to the worms!'

"Now all these reflections returned upon my heart with the weight of a millstone. I cried to the Lord, and those words were deeply impressed on my spirits, 'Where I am there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.' This promise was full of comfort to my soul. I saw, that in Christ's immediate presence was our home, and that we should find our reunion in being deeply centred in him. I received it as a fresh marriage for eternity. As such, I

trust for ever to hold it. All that day, whenever I thought on that expression, *to behold my glory*, it seemed to wipe away every tear, and was as the ring whereby we were joined anew.

" Awaking some time after, he said, 'Polly, I have been thinking, it was Israel's fault, that they asked for *signs*. We will not do so, but, abandoning our whole selves into the hands of God, we will lie patiently before him, assured that he will do all things well.'

" ' My dear Love,' said I, ' if ever I have done or said any thing to grieve thee, how will the remembrance wound my heart, shouldst thou be taken from me !'

" He entreated and charged me, with inexpressible tenderness, not to allow the thought; declaring his thankfulness for our union, in a variety of words written on my heart as with the adamantine pen of friendship.

" On Wednesday, after groaning all day under the weight of the power of God, he told me he had received such a manifestation of the full meaning of those words, ' God is Love,' as he could never be able to tell. ' It fills me,' said he, ' every moment. O Polly, my dear Polly, God is Love. Shout, shout aloud ! I want a gust of praise to go to the ends of the earth. But it seems as if I could not speak much longer. Let us fix on a sign between ourselves, (tapping me twice with his finger,) now I mean, ' God is Love.' And we will draw each other into God. Observe ! By this we will draw each other into God.'

" Sally coming in, he cried out, ' O Sally, God is Love. Shout both of you : I want to hear you shout his praise.' All this time the medical friend who diligently attended him, hoped he was in no danger; as he had no bad headach, much sleep, without the least delirium, and an almost regular pulse. So was the disease, though commissioned to take his life, restrained by the power of God.

" On Thursday his speech began to fail. While he was able, he spoke to all that came in his way. Hearing that a stranger was in the house, he ordered her to be called up, though uttering two sentences almost made him faint. To his friendly doctor he would not be silent, while he had any power of speech. After saying, ' O sir, you take much thought for my body : give me leave to take thought for your soul.' When I could scarcely understand any thing he said, I spoke these words, ' God is Love.' Instantly, as if all his powers were awakened, he broke out in a rapture, ' God is Love ! Love ! O for that gust of praise I want to sound !'—Here his voice again failed. He suffered many ways; but with such patience, as none but those then present can conceive. If I named his sufferings, he would smile, and make the sign.

" On Friday, finding his body covered with spots, I felt a sword pierce through my soul. As I was kneeling by his side, with my hand in his, entreating the Lord to be with us in this tremendous hour, he strove to say many things, but could not : pressing my hand, and often repeating the sign. At last he breathed out, ' Head of the Church, be Head to my wife !" When, for a few moments, I

was forced to leave him, Sally said to him, 'My dear master, do you know me?' He replied, 'Sally, God will put his right hand under you.' She added, 'O my dear master, should you be taken away, what a disconsolate creature will my poor dear mistress be?" He replied, 'God will be her all in all.' He had always delighted much in these words,

'Jesu's blood through earth and skies,
Mercy, free, boundless mercy cries.'

Whenever I repeated them to him, he would answer, *Boundless! boundless! boundless!* He now added, though with great difficulty,

'Mercy's full power I *soon* shall prove,
Lov'd with an everlasting love.'

"On Saturday afternoon his fever seemed quite off, and a few friends standing near the bed, he reached his hand to each, and looking on a minister, said, 'Are you ready to assist to-morrow?' His recollection surprised us, as the day of the week had not been named in his room. Many believed he would recover; and one said 'Do you think the Lord will raise you up?' He strove to answer, saying, 'Raise me in the resur'—meaning in the resurrection. To another, asking the same question, he said, 'I leave it all to God.'

"In the evening, the fever returned with violence, and the mucus falling on his throat almost strangled him. It was supposed the same painful emotion would grow more and more violent to the last. As I felt this exquisitely, I cried to the Lord to remove it; and, glory be to his name, he did. From that time it returned no more. As night drew on, I perceived him dying very fast. His fingers could hardly make the sign, (which he scarce ever forgot) and his speech seemed quite gone. I said, 'My dear creature, I ask not for myself, *I know thy soul;* but for the sake of others, if Jesus is very present with thee, lift thy right hand.' He did. 'If the prospect of glory sweetly opens before thee, repeat the sign.' He immediately raised it again: and in half a minute, a second time: he then threw it up, as if he would reach the top of the bed. After this, his dear hands moved no more: but on my saying, 'Art thou in much pain?' he answered, 'No.' From this time he lay in a kind of sleep, though with his eyes open and fixed. For the most part he sat upright against pillows, with his head a little inclining to one side: and so remarkably composed and triumphant was his countenance, that the least trace of death was scarcely discernible in it.

"Twenty-four hours he was in this situation, breathing like a person in common sleep. About thirty-five minutes past ten, on Sunday night, August 14th, his precious soul entered into the joy of his Lord, without one struggle or groan, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

"And here I break off my mournful story: but on my bleeding

heart the fair picture of his heavenly excellence will be for ever drawn. When I call to mind his ardent zeal, his laborious endeavours to seek and to save the lost, his diligence in the employment of his time, his Christ-like condescension towards me, and his uninterrupted converse with heaven; I may well be allowed to add, my loss is beyond the power of words to paint. I have gone *through deep waters:* but all my afflictions were nothing compared to this. Well: I want no pleasant prospect, but upwards; nor any thing whereon to fix my hope, but immortality.

"On the 17th, his dear remains were deposited in Madeley Churchyard, amid the tears and lamentations of thousands. The service was performed by the Rev. Mr. Hatton, Rector of Waters-Upton, whom God enabled to speak in a pathetic manner to his weeping flock. In the conclusion, at my request, he read the following paper:—

"As it was the desire of my beloved husband to be buried in this plain manner, so, out of tenderness, he begged that I might not be present. And in all things I would obey him.

"Permit me, then, by the mouth of a friend, to bear my open testimony, to the glory of God, that I, who have known him in the most perfect manner, am constrained to declare, that I never knew any one to walk so closely in the ways of God as he did. The Lord gave him a conscience tender as the apple of an eye. He literally preferred the interest of every one to his own.

"He was rigidly just, but perfectly loose from all attachment to the world. He shared *his all* with the poor, who lay so close to his heart, that at the approach of death, when he could not speak without difficulty, he cried out, 'O my poor! What will become of my poor?' He was blessed with so great a degree of humility, as is scarce to be found. I am witness, how often he has rejoiced in being treated with contempt. Indeed it seemed the very food of his soul, to be little and unknown. When he desired me to write a line to his brother, if he died, I replying, 'I will write him all the Lord's dealings with thee;' 'No, no,' said he: 'write nothing about me. I only desire to be forgotten. *God is all.*'

"His zeal for souls I need not tell *you*. Let the labours of twenty-five years, and a martyr's death in the conclusion, imprint it on your hearts. His diligent visitation of the sick occasioned the fever, which, by God's commission, tore him from you and me. And his vehement desire to take his last leave of you, with dying lips and hands, gave, it is supposed, the finishing stroke, by preparing his blood for putrefaction. Thus has he lived and died your servant. And will any of you refuse to meet him at God's right hand in that day?

"He walked with death always in sight. About two months ago, he came to me and said, 'My dear love, I know not how it is, but I have a strange impression, death is very near us, as if it would be some sudden stroke upon one of us. And it draws out all my soul in prayer, that we may be ready.' He then broke out, 'Lord, pre-

pare the soul thou wilt call. And, O stand by thy poor disconsolate one that shall be left behind."

"A few days before his departure, he was filled with love in an uncommon manner, saying to me, 'I have had such a discovery of the depth of that word, *God is Love*, I cannot tell the half. O shout his praise.' The same he testified, as long as he had a voice, and continued to testify to the end, by a most lamb-like patience, in which he smiled over death, and set his last seal to the glorious truths he had so long preached among you.

"Three years, nine months, and two days, I have possessed my heavenly-minded husband. But now the sun of my earthly joy is set for ever, and my soul is filled with anguish, which only finds its consolation in a total resignation to the will of God. When I was asking the Lord, if he pleased to spare him to me a little longer, the following promise was impressed on my mind with great power (in the accomplishment of which *I look for our reunion*) 'Where I am, there shall my servants be, that they may behold my glory.' Lord, hasten the hour!"

There is little need of adding any farther character of this man of God, to the foregoing account, given by one who wrote out of the fulness of her heart. I would only observe, that for many years I despaired of finding any inhabitant of Great-Britain, that could stand in any degree of comparison with Gregory Lopez, or Monsieur de Renty. But let an impartial person judge, if Mr. Fletcher was at all inferior to them? Did he not experience as deep communion with God, and as high a measure of inward holiness, as was experienced either by one or the other of those burning and shining lights? And it is certain his outward holiness shone before men, with full as bright a lustre as theirs. But if any should attempt to draw a parallel between them, there are two circumstances that deserve consideration. One is, we are not assured, that the writers of *their* lives, did not extenuate, if not suppress what was amiss in them. And some things amiss we are assured there were, viz. many touches of superstition, and some of idolatry, in worshipping saints, the Virgin Mary in particular. But I have not suppressed or extenuated any thing in Mr. Fletcher's character. For indeed I knew nothing that was amiss, nothing that needed to be extenuated, much less suppressed. A second circumstance is, that the writers of *their* lives, could not have so full a knowledge of them, as both Mrs. Fletcher and I had of Mr. Fletcher, being eye and ear-witnesses of his whole conduct. Consequently we know, that his life was not sullied with any mixture of either idolatry or superstition. I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles. And in all that time, I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action.—To conclude. Many exemplary men have I known, holy in heart and life, within fourscore years. But one equal to him, I have not known: one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblameable a cha-

racter, in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such, on this side of Eternity.

As it is possible we may all be such as he was, let us endeavour to follow him as he followed Christ!

Norwich, Oct. 24, 1785.

Mr. FLETCHER'S EPITAPH.

Here lies the Body of
The Rev. JOHN WILLIAM DE LA FLECHERE,
Vicar of Madeley;
Who was born at Nyon in Switzerland,
September 12, 1729,
And finished his course, August 14, 1785,
In this Village,
Where his unexampled Labours
Will never be forgotten.
He exercised his Ministry for the space of 25 years
In this Parish,
With uncommon Zeal and Ability.
But though many believed his report,
Yet he might with justice have adopted
The Lamentation of the Prophet,
"All the Day long have I stretched out my Hands
Unto a disobedient and gain-saying People:
Yet surely my Judgment is with the Lord,
And my Work with my God."

ADVICE TO THE PEOPLE CALLED METHODISTS, WITH REGARD TO DRESS.

I. 1. I AM not fond of saying the same thing over and over; especially when I have so many things to say, that the day of life, which with me is far spent, is not likely to suffice for them. But, in some cases, it is needful for you that I should: and then it is not grievous to me. And it may be best to speak freely and fully at once, that there may be the less need of speaking on this head hereafter.

2. When we look into the Bible with any attention, and then look round into the world, to see who believes, and who lives according to this Book; we may easily discern, that the system of practice, as well as the system of truth there delivered, are torn in pieces, and scattered abroad, like the members of Absyrtus. Every denomination of Christians retains some part either of Christian truth or practice: these hold fast one part, and those another, as their fathers did before them. What is the duty, meantime, of those who desire to follow the whole word of God? Undoubtedly to gather up all these fragments, that, if possible, nothing be lost: with all diligence to follow all those we see about us, so far as they follow the Bible; and to join together, in one scheme of truth and practice, what almost all the world put asunder.

3. Many years ago, I observed several parts of Christian Practice among the people called Quakers. Two things I particularly remarked among them, plainness of speech, and plainness of dress. I willingly adopt both with some restrictions, and particularly plainness of dress. The same I recommended to you when God first called you out of the world; and after the addition of more than twenty years experience, I recommend it to you still.

4. But before I go any farther, I must entreat you, in the name of God, be open to conviction. Whatever prejudices you have contracted from education, custom, or example, divest yourselves of them, as far as possible. Be willing to receive light either from God or man: do not shut your eyes against it. Rather be glad to see more than you did before, to "have the eyes of your understanding opened." Receive the truth in the love thereof, and you will have reason to bless God for ever.

II. 1. Not that I would advise you to imitate the people called Quakers, in those little particularities of dress, which can answer no possible end, but to distinguish them from all other people. To be singular, merely for singularity's sake, is not the part of a Christian. I do not, therefore, advise you to wear a hat of such dimensions, or a coat of a particular form. Rather, in things that are absolutely

indifferent, that are of no consequence at all, humility and courtesy require you to conform to the customs of your country.

2. But I advise you to imitate them, First, in the neatness of their apparel. This is highly to be commended, and quite suitable to your Christian calling. Let all your apparel, therefore, be as clean as your situation in life will allow. It is certain, the poor cannot be as clean as they would, as having little change of raiment. But let even these be as clean as they can, as care and diligence can keep them. Indeed they have particular need so to be, because cleanliness is one great branch of frugality. It is, likewise, more conducive to health than is generally considered. Let the poor, then, especially, labour to be clean, and provoke those of a higher rank to jealousy.

3. I advise you to imitate them, Secondly, in the plainness of their apparel. In this are implied two things: 1, That your apparel be cheap, not expensive; far cheaper than others in your circumstances wear, or than you would wear if you knew not God: 2, That it be grave, not gay, airy, or showy;—not in the point of the fashion. And these easy rules may be applied both to the materials, whereof it is made, and the manner wherein it is made or put on.

4. Would you have a further rule with respect to both? Then take one, which you may always carry in your bosom: "Do every thing herein with a single eye;" and this will direct you in every circumstance. Let a single intention to please God prescribe, both what clothing you shall buy, and the manner wherein it shall be made, and how you shall put it on and wear it. To express the same thing in other words, let all you do, in this respect, be so done, that you may offer it to God a sacrifice acceptable through Christ Jesus: so that, consequently, it may increase your reward, and brighten your crown in heaven. And so it will do, if it be agreeable to Christian humility, seriousness, and charity.

5. Shall I be more particular still? Then I *exhort all those who desire me to watch over their souls*, Wear no gold, (whatever officers of state may do, or magistrates; as the ensign of their office;) no pearls, or precious stones; use no curling of hair, or costly apparel, how grave soever. I *advise those who are able to receive this saying*, Buy no velvets, no silks, no fine linen, no superfluities, no *mere ornaments*, though ever so much in fashion. Wear nothing, though you have it already, which is of a glaring colour, or which is, in any kind, gay, glistening, or showy; nothing made in the very height of the fashion; nothing apt to attract the eyes of the by-standers. I do not advise women to wear rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, (of whatever kind or colour,) or ruffles, which, by little and little, may shoot easily out from one to twelve inches deep. Neither do I advise men to wear coloured waistcoats, shining stockings, glittering or costly buckles or buttons, either on their coats, or in their sleeves, any more than gay, fashionable, or expensive perukes. It is true, these are little, very little things, which are not worth defending: therefore, give them up, let them drop, throw them away without

another word. Else a little needle may cause much pain in your flesh, a little self-indulgence much hurt to your soul.

III. 1. For the preceding exhortation I have the authority of God in clear and express terms, "I will that women," (and by parity of reason men too,) "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, not broidered (curled) hair, or gold, or pearls," (one kind of precious stones, which was then most in use, put for all,) "or costly apparel, but" (which becometh women professing godliness,) "with good works," 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. Again, "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting (curling) the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on apparel. But let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God, of great price," 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4. Nothing can be more express. The wearing of gold, of precious stones, and of costly apparel, together with curling of hair, is here forbidden by name; nor is there any restriction made, either here, or in any other scripture. Whoever, therefore, says, *There is no harm in these things*, may as well say, *There is no harm in stealing or adultery!*

2. There is something peculiarly observable in the manner, wherein both St. Peter and St. Paul speak of these things: "Let not your adorning," says St. Peter, "be that outward adorning; but let it be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." The latter clause is not added barely to fill up the sentence, but with strong and weighty reason. For there is a direct contrariety, (as little as we may suspect it) between that outward and this inward adorning; and that both with regard to their source, and with regard to their tendency. As to their source, all that adorning springs from nature; a meek and quiet spirit from grace. The former from conforming to our own will, and the will of man; the latter from conformity to the will of God. And, as to their tendency, nothing more directly tends to destroy meekness and quietness of spirit, than all that outward adorning, whereby we seek to commend ourselves to men, and not to God; for this cherishes all those passions and tempers, which overthrow the quiet of every soul wherein they dwell.

3. Let them "adorn themselves," saith St. Paul, "not with curling of hair, or with gold, pearls, or costly apparel, but" (which becometh women professing godliness,) "with good works." The latter clause is here, likewise, added for plain and weighty reasons: for, 1, That kind of adorning cannot spring from godliness, from either the love or fear of God, from a desire of conforming to his will, or from the mind which was in Christ. 2, It no way tends to increase godliness: it is not conducive to any holy temper. But, 3, It manifestly tends to destroy several of the tempers most essential to godliness. It has no friendly influence on humility; whether we aim at pleasing others or ourselves hereby. Either in one case or the other, it will rather increase pride or vanity, than lowliness of heart. It does not at all minister to the seriousness which becomes a sinner born to die. It is utterly inconsistent with simplicity: no one uses it merely to please God. Whoever acts with a single eye, does all

things to be seen and approved of God; and can no more dress than he can pray, or give alms, to be seen of men.

4. "O but one may be as humble in velvet and embroidery, as another is in sackcloth." True: for a person may wear sackcloth, and have no humility at all. The heart may be filled with pride and vanity whatever the raiment may be. Again, women under the yoke of unbelieving parents or husbands, as well as men in office, may, on several occasions, be constrained to put on gold or costly apparel. And, in cases of this kind, plain experience shows, that the baneful influence is suspended: so that, wherever it is not our choice, but our cross, it may consist with godliness, with a meek and quiet spirit, with lowliness of heart, with Christian seriousness. But it is not true, that any one can choose this from a single eye to please God; or, consequently, without sustaining great loss, as to lowliness and every other Christian temper.

5. But however this be, can you be adorned at the same time with costly apparel, and with good works? That is in the same degree as you might have been, had you bestowed less cost on your apparel? You know this is impossible: the more you expend on the one, the less you have to expend on the other. Costliness of apparel, in every branch, is, therefore, immediately, directly, inevitably, destructive of good works. You see a brother, for whom Christ died, ready to perish for want of needful clothing. You would give it him gladly: but alas! "It is corban, whereby he might have been profited." It is given already, not indeed for the service of God, not to the treasury of the temple; but either to please the folly of others, or to feed vanity, or the lust of the eye in yourself. Now, even suppose these were harmless tempers, yet what an unspeakable loss is this, if it be really true, that "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!" If there be indeed a reward in heaven for every work of faith, for every degree of the labour of love.

IV. 1. As to the advice subjoined, it is easy to observe, that all those smaller things are, in their degree, liable to the same objections as the greater. If they are gay, showy, pleasing to the eye, the putting them on does not spring from a single view to please God. It neither flows from, nor tends to advance a meek and quiet spirit. It does not arise from, nor any way promote real, vital godliness.

2. And if they are in any wise costly, if they are purchased with any unnecessary expense, they cannot but (in proportion to that expense,) be destructive of good works: of consequence, they are destructive of that charity, which is fed thereby: hardening our heart against the cry of the poor and needy, by inuring us to shut up our bowels of compassion toward them.

3. At least, all unnecessary expenses of this kind, whether small or great, are senseless and foolish. This we may defy any man living to get over, if he allows there is another world. For there is no reward in heaven for laying out your money in ornaments, or costly

apparel: whereas you may have an eternal reward, for whatever you expend on earth.

4. Consider this more closely. Here are two ways proposed of laying out such a sum of money. I may lay it out in expensive apparel for myself, or in necessary clothing for my neighbour. The former will please my own eye, or that of others: the latter will please God. Now suppose there were no more harm in the one than in the other, in that which pleases man, than in that which pleases God: is there as much good in it? If they were equally innocent, are they equally wise? By the one, I gratify the desire of the eye, and gain a pleasure that perishes in the using: by the other, I gain a larger share of those pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. By the former, I obtain the applause of men; by the latter, the praise of God. In this way, I meet with the admiration of fools: in that, I hear from the Judge of all, "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

5. Brethren, whatever ye are accounted by men, I would not have you fools in God's account. "Walk ye circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise;" not in those ways which God *may possibly forgive*, (to put things in the most favourable light:) but in those which he *will certainly reward*. "In wickedness be ye children" still; "but in understanding be ye men." I want to see a visible body of people, who are standing examples of this wisdom; patterns of doing all things, great and small, with an eye to God and eternity.

V. 1. But we may be assured, the wisdom of the world will find out abundance of objections to this. Accordingly, it is objected, first, "If God has given us plentiful fortunes, if we are placed in the higher ranks of life, we must act suitably to our fortune. We ought then to dress according to our rank, that is, in gold and costly apparel." Not to insist, that none of *you* are of this rank, I answer, Where is this written? Our Saviour once occasionally said, "Behold they who wear gorgeous (splendid) apparel are in kings' courts:" but he does not say, they ought to be even there: he neither enjoins, nor countenances it. And where is this either enjoined or allowed by him or any of his Apostles? Bring me plain, scriptural proof for your assertion, or I cannot allow it.

2. "But did not God give express command by Moses, that some even among his chosen people should be adorned in the most exquisite manner, with gold and precious stones and costly array? Indeed he did: he expressly commanded this with regard to Aaron and his successors in the High-priesthood. But to this I answer, first, this direction which God gave, with regard to the Jewish High-Priest, can certainly affect no person in England, unless the Archbishop of Canterbury. And I apprehend, he does not plead the precedent. Secondly, the Jews and we are under different dispensations. The glory of the whole Mosaic dispensation was chiefly visible and external: whereas the glory of the Christian dispensation is of an invisible and spiritual nature.

3. "But what then are gold and precious stones for? Why have

they a place in the creation?" What if I say, I cannot tell? There are abundance of things in the creation, which I do not know the use of. What are crocodiles, lions, tigers, scorpions for? Why have so many poisons a place in the creation? Some of them are for medicine: but whatever they are for, in whatever manner they may be useful, they are certainly not to be used in such a manner as God has expressly forbidden.

4. "But if they were not thus adorned, kings and generals would be despised by their subjects and soldiers." Supposing they would, that is nothing to you: for you are neither kings nor generals. But it is absolutely certain, they would not, if they were not despised on other accounts. If they are valiant and wise, they will never be despised for the plainness of their dress. Was ever general or king more esteemed or beloved by his subjects and soldiers, than King Charles of Sweden? And it is sure, he wore no gold or costly apparel, not so much as a common officer. But we need not go so many years back. Who is the Prince that is now honoured and beloved both by his subjects and soldiers, far beyond any other king or general in Europe? There is no need to repeat his name. But does he gain this honour and love by the costliness of his apparel? So far from it, that he rarely uses any other dress, than the uniform of his own guards.

5. "But if all men were to dress like him, how would tradesmen live?" I answer, 1, God certainly considered this, before ever he gave these commands. And he would never have given them, had he not seen, that if they were universally observed, men, in general, would live better than they otherwise could; better in this world, as well as that to come. But, 2, There is no danger at all, that they should be universally observed. Only a little flock in any civilized nation will observe them, till the knowledge of God covers the earth. 3, If those who do observe them, employ the money they thus save in the most excellent manner, then a part of what before only served to fat a few rich tradesmen for hell, will suffice to feed, and clothe, and employ many poor, that seek the kingdom of heaven. 4, And how will those tradesmen themselves live? They will live like men, by honest labour, most of whom, before, lived like swine, wallowing in all gluttony and sensuality. But, 5, This is all mere trifling. It is only a copy of your countenance. For it is not this, it is not a regard to trade, or the good of the nation, that makes you disobey God. No: it is pride, vanity, or some other sinful temper, which is the real cause of these sinful actions.

6. "But we cannot carry on our trade without dressing like other people." If you mean only conforming to those customs of your country, that are neither gay nor costly, why should you not "dress like other people?" I really think you should. Let an Englishman dress like other Englishmen: not like a Turk or a Tartar. Let an Englishwoman dress like other Englishwomen; not like a French woman or a German. But if you mean "conformity to them in what God has forbidden," the answer is ready at hand. If you cannot

carry on your trade, without breaking God's command, you must not carry it on. But I doubt the fact: I know no trade which may not be carried on by one who uses plain and modest apparel. I fear, therefore, this too is but a copy of your countenance. You love these things, and, therefore, think them necessary. Your heart carries away your judgment; if you were not fond of them, you would never dream of their necessity.

7. In one single case these things may be necessary, that is, unavoidable, namely, that of women who are under the yoke of self-willed, unreasonable husbands or parents. Such may be constrained to do, in some degree, what otherwise they would not. And they are blameless herein, if, 1, They use all possible means, arguments, entreaties, to be excused from it; and when they cannot prevail, 2, Do it just so far as they are constrained, and no farther.

VI. 1. And now, brethren, what remains, but that I beseech you, who are not under the yoke, who are under God, the directors of your own actions, to set prejudices, obstinacy, fashion aside; and to yield to Scripture, to reason, to truth. Suppose, as some affirm, you acted on no higher motive than to please me herein, I know not that you would have need to be ashamed; even this you might avow in the face of the sun. You owe something to me: perhaps it is not my fault, if you owe not your own souls also. If then you did an indifferent thing only on this principle, not to give me any uneasiness, but to oblige, to comfort me in my labour, would you do much amiss? How much more may you be excused in doing what I advise, when truth, reason, and Scripture advise the same? When the thing in question is not an indifferent thing, but clearly determined by God himself?

2. Some years ago, when I first landed at Savannah in Georgia, a gentlewoman told me, "I assure you, Sir, you will see as well-drest a congregation on Sunday, as most you have seen in London." I did so; and soon after took occasion to expound those scriptures which relate to dress, and to press them freely upon my audience, in a plain and close application. All the time that I afterward ministered at Savannah, I saw neither gold in the church, nor costly apparel. But the congregation, in general, was almost constantly clothed in plain, clean linen or woollen.

3. And why should not my advice, grounded on Scripture and reason, weigh with you as much as with them? I will tell you why, 1, You are surrounded with saints of the world, persons fashionably, reputably religious. And these are constant opposers of all, who would go farther in religion than themselves. These are continually warning you against running into extremes, and striving to beguile you from the simplicity of the gospel. 2, You have near you still more dangerous enemies than these, Antinomians, whether German or English; who, when any Christian practice is enforced, come with the cuckoo's note, "*the law, the law*;" and while they themselves glory in their shame, make you ashamed of what should be your glory. 3, You have suffered by false teachers of our own,

who undermined the doctrine you had received; negatively, in public, by not insisting upon it, by not exhorting you to dress, as persons professing godliness; (and, not to speak for a Christian duty, is, in effect, to speak against it:) and positively in private, either by jesting upon your exactness in observing the Scripture-rule, or by insinuations, which, if you did not mind then, yet would afterward weaken your soul.

4. You have been, and are at this day, in perils among false brethren: I mean, not only those of other congregations, who count strictness all one with bondage, but many of our own; in particular those, who were once clearly convinced of the truth; but they have sinned away the conviction themselves, and now endeavour to harden others against it; at least, by example; by returning again to the folly, from which they were once clean escaped. But what is the example of all mankind, when it runs counter to Scripture and reason? I have warned you a thousand times not to regard any example, which contradicts reason or Scripture. If ever it should be, (pray that it may not be, but if it ever should,) that I or my brother, my wife, or his, or all of us together, should set an example contrary to Scripture and reason, I entreat you, regard it not at all; still let Scripture and reason prevail.

5. You who have passed the morning, perhaps the noon of life, who find the shadows of the evening approach, set a better example to those that are to come, to the now-rising generation. With you the day of life is far spent; the night of death is at hand. You have no time to lose: see that you redeem every moment that remains. Remove every thing out of the way, be it ever so small, (though indeed gay or costly apparel is not so,) that might any ways obstruct your lowliness or meekness, your seriousness of spirit, your single intention to glorify God, in all your thoughts, and words, and actions. Let no needless expense hinder you being in the highest degree you possibly can, "rich in good works:" "Ready to distribute, willing to communicate," till you are clothed with glory and immortality.

Our carcasses will soon fall into the dust; then let the survivors adorn them with flowers. Meantime let us regard those ornaments only, that will accompany us into eternity.

6. You that are in the morning of your days, either your form is agreeable, or it is not. If it is not, do not make your person remarkable; rather let it lie hid in common apparel. On every account, it is your wisdom to recommend yourself to the eye of the mind; but especially to the eye of God, who reads the secrets of your hearts, and in whose sight the incorruptible ornaments alone are of great price. But if you would recommend yourself by dress, is any thing comparable to plain neatness? What kind of persons are those, to whom you could be recommended by gay or costly apparel? None that are any way likely to make you happy. This pleases only the silliest and worst of men. At most it gratifies only the silliest and worst principle in those who are of a nobler character.

7. To you whom God has intrusted with a more pleasing form, those ornaments are quite needless,—

> "Th' adorning thee with so much art,
> Is but a barbarous skill;
> 'Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
> Too apt before to kill."

That is, to express ourselves in plain English, without any figure of poetry, it only tends to drag them faster into death everlasting, who were going fast enough before, by additional provocations to lust, or at least, inordinate affection. Did you actually design to raise either of these in those who looked upon you? What! while you and they were in the more immediate presence of God! What profaneness and inhumanity mixed together! But if you designed it not, did you not foresee it? You might have done so without any extraordinary sagacity. "Nay, I did not care or think about it." And do you say this by way of excuse? You "scatter abroad arrows, fire-brands, and death;" and do not care or think about it!

8. O let us walk more charitably and more wisely for the time to come! Let us all cast aside, from this very hour, whatever does not become men and women professing godliness: whatever does not spring from the love and fear of God, and minister thereto. Let our seriousness shine before men, not our dress: let all who see us know that we are not of this world. Let our adorning be that which fadeth not away, even righteousness and true holiness. If ye regard not weakening my hands and grieving my spirit, yet grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Do you ask, "But what shall I do with the gay or costly apparel, and with the ornaments I have already? Must I suffer them to be lost? Ought I not to wear them now I have them?" I answer, there is no loss like that of using them; wearing them is the greatest loss of all. But what then shalt thou do with them? Burn them rather than wear them; throw them into the depth of the sea. Or if thou canst with a clear conscience, sell them, and give the money to them that want. But buy no more at the peril of thy soul. Now be a faithful steward. After providing for those of thine own household things needful for life and godliness, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, relieve the sick, the prisoner, the stranger, with all thou hast. Then shall God clothe thee with glory and honour in the presence of men and angels; and thou shalt "shine as the brightness of the firmament," yea, "as the stars for ever and ever."

THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

I AM persuaded, it is not possible for me to write any thing so full, so strong, and so clear on this subject, as has been written near a hundred and fifty years ago, by a person of equal sense and piety. I shall, therefore, only abridge what he has written on the head, with some few alterations and additions. I beseech you all, who are more immediately concerned, to read it with the calmest attention, and with earnest prayer, that what is here written may be transcribed into your hearts and lives.

CHAPTER I.

The First Duty of the Married,—CHASTITY.

1. THIS duty is so manifest, that no person whatever can pretend ignorance of it. The law of God, the law of nature, and the laws of all well ordered societies enjoin it. The violation of this unties the marriage-knot, and dissolves the marriage-covenant. For our Lord himself, who utterly disallows of other divorces, yet allows divorce in case of adultery. "But may the person wronged admit the wrong-doer again, after the offence is known?" I answer, "They may, provided the offender give full, satisfactory proof of amendment." We read not any command to the contrary. But if the offender persist in sin, then the innocent person, having full proof thereof, is bound to withdraw from the sinner.

2. Let any, who find strong temptations to this sin, 1, Constantly and conscientiously perform private duties. The blessing of God hereon will make him conqueror, over what before seemed most unconquerable. 2, Be diligent in your calling, that you may have no leisure for inflaming imaginations. It is certain, an idle person, if occasion and constitution serve, will sooner or later prove adulterous. But diligence joined with hearty prayer, will preserve a man pure and undefiled. 3, Be exactly temperate. It is easy to put out the fiercest fire, by withdrawing the fuel. If, therefore, you would be chaste in your marriage, be sparing in your food. 4, Carefully shun every temptation, and all opportunities of sin; especially, shun as a rock the company of any person apt to tempt,

or to be tempted: and consider, that the coldest water will be hot, if it be set near the fire.

3. These directions are such as agree to all, married or unmarried. There remains another help peculiar to the former, the due use of marriage. The ordinances of God will answer their end, if our abuse of them do not hinder. Now God has ordained marriage for this end, among others, to prevent fornication. Wherefore let it be used in the manner it ought, and it will surely answer its end. And in this respect "the wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband." Neither "hath the husband power over his own body, but the wife." It is not in the choice of either, whether to live with the other, or not. But they are bound in conscience so to do, and cannot refuse it without grievous sin. There may indeed be a separation for a time, if needful affairs require. But it is not lawful for either the man or the woman to leave the other totally or finally.

4. In this their society, two things are to be observed, that it may be sanctified and temperate. First, It must be sanctified, that is, made lawful and holy to them, by the word of God and prayer. The word of God clearly shows the lawfulness of it. For God has said expressly, "Marriage is honourable among all men, and the bed undefiled." But let it also be sanctified, or made holy by prayer. Solemnly pray for the blessing of God upon his ordinance, not forgetting to return him particular thanks for his infinite goodness herein. That this is requisite none can deny, that will not deny the the authority of St. Paul. For he affirms, that marriage, as well as meat and drink, is sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving. As, therefore, it is a brutish profaneness for any man to sit down to his table, as a horse to the manger, without asking the blessing of God first, and to return from it as a fox from his prey, without praising him that gave him food and appetite; so it is great licentiousness for married persons to come together, as it were, brute beasts, without either prayer or thanksgiving. The hope of posterity, the stay of old age, the support of every man's house, the supply of the Church and Commonwealth, hang upon the fruit of marriage. Is it then more than needs, to ask the blessing of God in a thing of so great importance? Surely we should bring his curse upon us, were we either to forget it as needless, or despise it as ridiculous. Yea, whereas marriage is instituted in part, for the subduing inordinate desires, it cannot answer that end without God's blessing: which how can we expect, if we scorn to ask it? Certainly, the men that use marriage in a brutish manner, not seeing God therein, nor sanctifying it to themselves by these means, will thereby become more and more brutish. Wherefore let no man scoff at a duty plainly commanded by God: but let us learn to know the full efficacy of prayer, and to reap the fruit of it in all things.

5. It must, Secondly, be temperate. We are always to remember, God ordained marriage, chiefly for the increase of mankind, and not to kindle lustful desires, but to quench them. I confess, we

should take great heed of laying snares upon men's consciences, and must be very careful not to bind them where God has not bound them. But this is a sure rule: the quantity of every thing must be suited to the end. This being considered, the married are not to provoke desires, but allay them, when they provoke themselves. They must not strive to inflame the passions, when they are cool, but when they are moved of themselves, to assuage them. In a word, marriage should be used as sparingly, as consists with the need of the persons married. A temperate use promotes purity: excess inflames lust, and inclines to adultery. Wherefore, the foregoing rule should be carefully observed; that the married come no oftener together than is needful to extinguish natural desires, when they would otherwise become troublesome to them. Now the sanctified use of marriage is also a help to the temperate use of it. But they seldom fail to exceed who do not take care to make all things holy by prayer and thanksgiving.

6. Perhaps one might add, It should ever be accompanied with cheerfulness and willingness. They must neither deny themselves to each other, nor behave with grudging frowardness: but rather with readiness, and all demonstrations of sincere affection. The Scripture plainly testifies this, by the very term *benevolence*, or *good-will*. For no man can call that good-will, which is done churlishly and discontentedly; a behaviour that naturally tends to alienate the heart, and create suspicions of estrangement of affection.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Love of Married Persons.

1. THE marriage-covenant binds all that enter into it to several other duties as well as chastity; but not under the same forfeiture. Failing in these, breaks God's command, but does not break the bonds of matrimony. No ill behaviour dissolves this, while we are not wronged as to the marriage-bed. Thou art still a husband or a wife, though thy yoke-fellow is wanting in many duties. Be careful, therefore, to do thy own part still, however slenderly thou art requited.

2. The duties common to husbands and wives partly respect themselves, and partly their families. All the former sort may be reduced to two heads, love, and the fruits of love. First, Love: their hearts must be united, as well as their hands; else their union will be more troublesome than can be imagined. Love is the life and soul of marriage, without which it differs from itself, as a carcase from a living body. This makes all things easy, whereas the absence of it makes all things hard. Love seasons and sweetens

every state; love composes all controversies. In whomsoever love prevails, to them only marriage is what it should be, a pleasing combination of two persons into one home, one purse, one heart, and one flesh. And this love must have two especial properties: First, it must be spiritual; secondly, matrimonial. It must be spiritual in its ground, and in its working. Its chief ground must be the commandment of God. A Christian must love his wife, not only because she is beautiful or loving, but chiefly because God enjoins it. The wife must love her husband, not only because he is handsome, kind, or well-behaved, but because God, the sovereign of all souls, has commanded women to be "lovers of their own husbands." Not the face, portion, or good qualities of the married must be the chief cause of their loving each other; but the will of God; and that affection which stands on this foundation will be lasting, while that which stands on any other consideration will be subject to change every hour. For how can the building stand fast if the foundation sink away? Either some storm of contention will overthrow that love, or it will fall down of itself through age: or else it will degenerate into jealousy, the devouring canker-worm, that eats up the hearts of married persons, and consumes or spoils the sweet fruit they might reap. But he that loves his wife, because she is his wife, and God commands him to love her as such, will love her, so long as she is his wife, whatever she prove beside. Thou lovest thy wife, because she is fair, good-humoured, courteous: but what if all these should fail? Thou lovest thy husband, because he is handsome, sensible, kind: but where will thy love be, if these things should alter? You see, there is no firmness in that love which is procured only by these motives. But if thou love thy wife or husband, because God enjoins it, then thy love will be constant and perpetual.

3. This property of love, that it is spiritual, built on the rock of God's commandments, answers all the objections, which many would make against it in their own cases. *Who*, says a man, *can love such a wife?* And, *what wife*, says a woman, *can love such a husband?* I answer, a man whose affection is spiritual can love even such a wife. And the woman who has attained to spiritual love, finds it possible to love even such a husband.

4. But as the ground of their love must be spiritual, so must also the working thereof. It must seek the spiritual good of the person beloved, by every possible means. For that love which seeks only their temporal welfare, deserves no better name than carnal love. But surely those who love each other because God bids them, will love each other as God bids them. They will be careful of each other's souls, as well as of their bodies and estates. But, alas! how exceedingly does the love of most married people fail therein! Thou art kind to thy wife or husband, and it goes to thy heart, to think any thing should be wanting for their good. It is well: but so may a Turk as well as thou, if by good thou meanest only that which is temporal. But dost thou seek to help thy yoke-fellow to heavenly, as well as to earthly benefits? This is spiritual love: this

becomes a Christian husband, and a Christian wife. Be not then carnal in your love, *walking as men*, but spiritual, as the children of God.

5. But remember farther, that your love must be matrimonial, as well as spiritual. It must be matrimonial with regard, 1, To the degree, and, 2, To the effect. For the first, A man should love his wife, a woman her husband, above all the creatures in the world. Next to the living God, the wife is to have the highest place in the husband's heart, and he in her's. No neighbour, no friend, no parent, no child, should be so near and dear to either as the other. They are joined in the closest of all unions; therefore their mutual affection should be most abundant. They must do more, and suffer more for each other, than for any other in all the world. They must bear with more faults in each other than any besides, and be ready to take more pains for each other.

6. Secondly. As to the effect of this love, it should so knit them together, that they may receive full satisfaction in each other. Love should cause a man to account his wife the only woman in the world: and so the wife to account her husband the only man in the world. The persons of each should be to the other the most precious of all persons. Do any object, This cannot be, unless every man and every woman could find in their own yoke-fellow as amiable qualities as are to be found in others? I answer, Not the good qualities of either, but the good pleasure of God is the ground of their mutual dearness. Good qualities make this duty more easy: but it is still a duty, though good qualities be away. A man may lawfully think another woman a better woman than his own wife: but he may not love another woman, though more virtuous, above his own, though less virtuous. This is the effect of matrimonial love, to settle the heart each upon the other above all in the world besides. It admits of none equal in affection, but places the yoke-fellow next to our own soul. Nor will it bear the desire of change, but so links their hearts together, that in this respect they are only dear to each other.

7. The means to get and confirm this love is, to have one house, one table, one bed. But besides this natural means of procuring love, there are two spiritual means. The one is, to take special notice of God's gracious providence in their match. They must often consider, that God joined them together, for their mutual benefit, as being on the whole fitter for each other, than any other besides could be. We know that a mean gift is often respected for the giver's sake. Therefore remember that God, in great goodness, (for crosses also comes to God's children from his goodness,) hath bestowed this yoke-fellow, and thou shalt dearly love thy wife or husband, though perhaps not so well tempered. For the dearness of the Giver will countervail the defects of the gift. And then thy yoke-fellow's distemper will grieve thee indeed, but not alienate thy affection.

8. Another means of uniting your souls is constantly to join in

exercises of piety. Pray together; sing together; confer together concerning your heavenly country, and this will be found an excellent means of confirming your mutual love. These will nourish the spirit of holiness in you; and that enkindles love, wherever it comes. By these you will soon perceive yourselves to have been spiritually profitable to each other: and to receive a spiritual benefit, cannot but beget and nourish spiritual affection. Naturally you would grow weary of each other: but if you season your natural communion with this communion in spiritual things, it will prevent all satiety. Jars and contentions are the great hinderances of love: but the joining together in these exercises will cause you to jar far more seldom; nor will any sudden jar fester or rankle, so as to breed hard thoughts of one another, which are the bane of love. Prayer will prevent most contentions, and compose all: for when you shall appear before God in prayer, instead of blaming each other, you will each blame yourself, and then all contention will cease.

9. But some may say, "What shall I do, who have such a husband or wife as neither can nor will join with me in the service of God?" I answer, Pray for that yoke-fellow who will not pray with thee. The less able and willing they are to entreat for themselves, the more frequently and earnestly entreat God for them. It may be, God will give thee thy desire, and turn their hearts to thee. At least, thy own soul will gain an increase of heavenly love to them. And this is sure, that to love your yoke-fellow spiritually and fervently, though you are not loved again, is far better, than to be loved of them, without so loving.

CHAPTER III.

Of the Effects of Love.

1. THE effects of nuptial love are three, pleasingness, faithfulness, helpfulness. The first, which must mix itself with all the rest, is an earnest desire to please each other, so far as it is possible to be done, without sinning against God. Wherefore, the husband must do or leave undone, any thing he can, that he may please his wife: and the wife must in any thing cross her own desires that she may satisfy his. In diet, attire, choice of company, and all things else, each must fulfil the other's desire as absolutely as can be done, without transgressing the law of God. As difficult as this may seem at first, practice will make it easy. Resolutely begin, and the proceeding will be pleasanter than the beginning; especially if both labour together, each seeking to oblige the other. For it cannot be difficult to satisfy one who desires to take as well as to give satisfaction.

2. But some will say, "This suits not me: nothing will satisfy

my froward yoke-fellow." I answer, it may be so: it is not in any one's power to make a froward person take a thing well: but it is in your power to do your best, to satisfy such an one; and to strive the more, the more averse to peace your companion is. "But it is hard to be still striving against the stream." It is; but duties must not be omitted because they are hard. The scholar who has a hard lesson must take the more pains to learn it. So the husband or wife that has a perverse companion, must take the more pains to please them. Let the difficulty, therefore, make thee more diligent; and encourage thyself in this tedious labour, by thinking, "If after all I cannot please my yoke-fellow, I shall not fail to please God. Yea, and the harder the work is, the better he will take it at my hands. Therefore, I will so behave, that they may receive content in all things, if any thing but sin will content them." This caution indeed we must observe, for we may not, to please any one, sin against God. If any thing but sin will satisfy, thou must do it, be it ever so contrary to thy own will. But if thou canst not fulfil the desires of the creature, without breaking the law of God, then thou must not fulfil them. Better offend a mortal man than the immortal God.

3. In the next place, husband and wife are to be helpful to each other. These two must always be united: therefore we speak of them together. This was the principal thing which God designed in the creation of the woman. "It is not good," saith he, "for man to be alone: I will make him a helpmeet for him." And undoubtedly man was intended to give, as well as to receive help. This helpful fidelity consists in their mutual care to abstain from and prevent whatever might grieve or hurt either: and to do themselves, and to incite others to do, whatever might comfort or benefit either. And this must extend to the soul, the body, the name, and the estate.

4. First, to the souls, by provoking each other on all occasions to inward and outward holiness. The husband must further the wife in all goodness, and the wife the husband: for she has also liberty to stir up her husband, by entreaty and fair means. And as they have special opportunity, so they should be always ready, with special diligence, to "provoke one another to love and good works." O how sweet is the society when they thus watch all occasions to further each other in godliness. Again, being continually together, they may discover in each other divers corruptions and imperfections. They must not turn these into matter of contempt, but of compassion and care for each other's reformation. They should observe each other's temper, till they perceive what infirmities each is chiefly inclined to, and then diligently abstain from what may provoke that evil, and apply all means that may heal it. If all their labour does not avail, they must not fear to seek the help of some common friend, who possibly may effect that cure which themselves had endeavoured in vain. And if even this doth not succeed, still they must wait and pray, referring the matter to God, the only physician of the soul, who is able in due time to redress all.

5. The same faithful helpfulness they owe to the bodies of each

other. They must shun all things that might cause sickness or pain to each other, and readily undergo any pains or cost, according to their power, to procure whatever is necessary either to keep or recover their health. They must comfort each other in the days of sorrow, that worldly sorrow work not death. The wife must be health to her husband in his sickness: she must support his weakness, and he her's. Sickness and weakness are things which of themselves are hard enough to be borne. There needs not the addition of unkindness to make the burden heavier. Let every husband and wife avoid or mend this fault, and be particularly careful of their behaviour, at that time above all, when either is visited with grief, or weakness, or sickness. When your wife is sick or pained, then comfort her with loving words, and cheer her by a tender countenance. Then see that she want no looking to, no help which thou canst procure. When thy husband is sick or weak, then stay him with comfortable speech, revive him with diligent attendance. Do all thou canst to ease his pain, and to recover his strength. Let thy love and care be his best physic, and thyself his best physician. This is to be faithful to thy husband's body, and to "cherish him in sickness as in health."

6. In the third place, man and wife must be faithfully helpful to each other's names, and that in a double respect. In maintaining them both between themselves, and also among others. First, they must hold fast a good opinion of each other, so far as it may possibly stand with truth. Yea, it is no blame for them to have somewhat too good an opinion of each other: for a man to think his wife not only more handsome, but more wise and good than she is; (making her virtues carry a greater show to the eye, by looking at them through the glass of love:) and for her to think him not only more proper, but more kind and good than he really is, by taking things with that largeness of good interpretation, which much love naturally puts upon them. Certainly then they should be peremptory to give no place to ungrounded, unwarranted surmises. They must on no account suffer their hearts to grow mistrustful of each other. All rash, ill-built, hasty surmises, must be far from them. Otherwise love will go out of the same door at which suspicion came in. He or she that has a suspicious head, has not a truly loving heart. Such may be lustful or fond; but a holy, virtuous, spiritual affection they cannot have. So long as they give way to evil surmisings, there is no place for this; and, therefore, of all domestic makebates, of all that breeds quarrels between married people, nothing in the world is more pestilently effectual to this bad end than jealousy. Having leavened the heart, it makes the speech tart and sharp, the countenance sour, and the whole behaviour distasteful. No good words, no good actions, or gestures, or looks, can proceed from a jealous heart. Jealousy will make one suck mischievous things out of his own finger's ends. Suffer not, therefore, this evil weed to grow up in the garden of matrimony; for no good herb will prosper by it; no praise-worthy thing will flourish. Let all then that are married

detest any thought of this kind that may arise. Let their hearts disdain to give the least credit, unless the proofs be more than manifest. Away then with this makebate, jealousy, this quarreller, suspicion, this breeder of brawls, this mother and nurse of contention, this underminer of love and of good husbandry, of all that should be profitable to a household. Away with it, I say, out of thine heart: chase it far from thy breast, from thy house. It is better to receive ten wrongs without suspecting, than to suspect one that is not received. Wherefore, as thou wouldst stand up for the good name of thy companion against the tongue of a slanderer, so stand for it against the dreams of thy own heart, against thy own slanderous imagination. And if any person will suffer his lips to be so ill employed as to become Satan's bellows, by blowing these coals betwixt you, by telling thee this or that, rebuke such a person, reject his words with detestation, flee his company, nor defile thy ears and heart, by giving gentle audience to a whisperer and tale-bearer. In a word, wouldst thou love or be loved? Wouldst thou live otherwise in marriage than as in a prison or dungeon? Then strengthen thy heart against all suspicion, and rather be any thing than jealous.

7. Ye must also be tender of each other's reputation abroad. This requireth two things: First, that each labour to conceal the weaknesses of the other, so far as it is possible, from all men. The husband must endeavour that none may know of his wife's faults but himself: and the wife must do her best to keep her husband's faults from the knowledge of every creature. On the contrary, to publish each other's sins is a monstrous treachery. To backbite an enemy is a sin; how much more to backbite one's own yoke-fellow? Whose faults can a man cover, if not his wife's, that is in effect his own? Or who can be free from reproach, if one so near as his wife deface his good name? It is impossible but man and wife must sooner or later discover their weaknesses to one another: and for them to be playing the tell-tale against each other, what soul does not loathe to think of it? If thou hast been so sinfully talkative before, now for shame lay thy hand upon thy mouth, that thou mayest no more incur the name of fool, by making thy tongue to spread abroad folly.

8. But besides this, you must faithfully keep each other's secrets. A man may have occasion to acquaint his wife with things he would not reveal to others; so a woman, to acquaint her husband. Now if in such cases a wife find that her husband has revealed what she intrusted him alone, or he find that she has revealed what he spoke to her in the confidence of love, this will breed such a distrust of the offending party, as will not easily be removed. Wherefore, let husbands and wives always mind this: if he lay up any thing in her breast, let him find it safe there, as in a chest, which cannot be opened by any pick-lock. If she commits a thing to his safe keeping, let it be imprisoned in his bosom: otherwise no man can choose but be strange to one whom experience has convinced of blabbing. And it is an infallible truth, that there is no comfortable living with one whom you cannot trust.

9. The last part of faithful helpfulness to each other, is that which concerns their estates. And to this end it is requisite, First, that all things be common between them, goods as well as persons: for if they make not a division in the greater, it is absurd to make it in the less. They should have one house and one purse: for they are one, and their estates should be one also. And having thus united their fortunes, let them, Secondly, practise good husbandry therein. This implies three things, diligence in getting, prudence in saving, providence in foreseeing. These three, industry, frugality, and forecast, make up good husbandry. And if any of these are wanting, so much is wanting, to the perfection of it; and so much also will be wanting, for their comfort and prosperity.

CHAPTER IV.

Of the Duties of the Married to their Family.

1. A MAN and his wife, who before were members of other families, join together that they may become the roots of a new family: wherein by training up their servants and children, they provide plants for God's vineyard, the Church. In this family the husband is the head; the wife is the next, as subordinate to him. They are both to maintain and govern their family. First, they must join in providing it with all necessaries, imitating herein the Father of this great family, the world, who fills every creature with good things fit for it. But they must govern as well as maintain their household; the man, as God's immediate officer, the woman, as an officer deputed by him, not equal, but subordinate: he, by the authority derived immediately from God; she, by authority derived from her husband.

2. The first point, in order to the due government of their family, is to educate their children well; more especially in their tender years. I cannot lay down a better method for this, than is laid down in a letter printed some years since; part of which is here subjoined.

"According to your desire, I have collected the principal rules I observed in educating my family. The children, (she had ten who came to man's estate, eight of whom were frequently at home together,) were put into a more regular method of living, in such things as they were capable of, from their birth, as in dressing, undressing, changing their linen, &c. The first quarter commonly passes in sleep. After that, they were, if possible, laid into their cradles awake, and rocked to sleep, and so they were kept rocking till it was time for them to awake. This was done to bring them to a regular course of sleeping, which at first was three hours in the

morning, and three in the afternoon: afterwards two hours, till they needed none at all.

"When they were turned a year old, they were taught to fear the rod, and to cry softly. By this means they escaped abundance of correction, which otherwise they must have had, and that odious noise of the crying of the children was rarely heard in the house.

"As soon as they were grown pretty strong, they were confined to three meals a day. They were never suffered to choose their meat, but always eat such things as were provided for the family. Whatever they had, they were never permitted to eat of more than one thing. Drinking or eating between meals was never allowed, but in case of sickness, which rarely happened.

"At six they had their supper. At seven their maid washed them, and got them all to bed by eight. Then she left them in their several rooms awake: for we allowed no such thing as sitting by a child till it fell asleep.

"They were so constantly used to eat and drink what was given them, that when any of them was ill, there was no difficulty in making them take the most unpleasant medicine. This I mention, to show, a person may be taught to take any thing, be it ever so disagreeable.

"In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done, is to conquer their will. To inform their understanding is a work of time, and must proceed by slow degrees: but the subjecting the will, is a thing which must be done at once; and the sooner the better. For by our neglecting timely correction, they contract a stubbornness, which is hardly ever to be conquered, and never without using that severity, which would be as painful to us as to the children. Therefore, I call those cruel parents, who pass for kind and indulgent; who permit their children to contract habits, which they know must be afterwards broken.

"Whenever a child is corrected, it must be conquered. And when his will is totally subdued, then a great many childish follies and inadvertencies may be passed by. Some should be overlooked and taken no notice of, and others mildly reproved. But no wilful transgression should ever be forgiven, without chastisement, less or more.

"I insist upon conquering the wills of children betimes, because this is the only foundation of a religious education, without which both precept and example will be ineffectual. But when this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason of its parents, till its own understanding comes to maturity, and the principles of religion have taken root.

"I cannot yet dismiss this subject: as self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children, ensures their after wretchedness and irreligion; and whatever checks and mortifies it, promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident, if we consider, that religion is nothing else but the doing the will of God, not our own: and that self-will, being the grand im-

pediment to our temporal and eternal happiness, no indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial of it unprofitable. Heaven or hell depends on this alone. So that the parent who studies to subdue it in his children, works together with God in the saving a soul; the parent who indulges it, does the devil's work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies, to damn the child, soul and body, for ever."

3. This advice, first to conquer the wills of children, is exactly agreeable to the Apostle's direction to parents, Eph. vi. 4, *Train them up* (I do not say, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;* for I know not what that odd expression means, but) εν παιδεια και νουθεσια Κυριου, *in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.* Εν παιδεια, *in the discipline* first; then, εν νουθεσια, in Christian knowledge; because they may be inured to discipline, before they are capable of instruction. This, therefore, I cannot but earnestly repeat, Break their wills betimes; begin this great work before they can run alone, before they can speak plain, perhaps before they can speak at all. Whatever pains it costs, conquer their stubbornness: Break the will, if you would not damn the child. I conjure you, not to neglect, not to delay this. Therefore, 1, Let a child, from a year old, be taught to fear the rod and to cry softly. It cannot be expressed, how much pain this will save both the parent and the child. In order to this, 2, Let him have nothing he cries for; absolutely nothing, great or small. Let this be an invariable rule; else you undo all your own work. 3, At all events, from that age, make him do as he is bid, if you whip ten times running to effect it. Let none persuade you, it is cruelty to do this; it is real cruelty not to do it. If you spare the rod, you spoil the child: If you do not conquer, you ruin him. Break his will now, and his soul shall live, and he will probably bless you to all eternity.

4. But we are by nature not only full of self-will, but likewise of pride, atheism, anger, falsehood, and idolatry. Now the end of education is to counteract and remove all the corruption of nature: of Christian education in particular, termed by St. Paul, "The discipline and instruction of the Lord." Set yourselves, therefore, ye Christian parents, to the work. Indeed it is not a little one. In order to accomplish it, you will need both the wisdom and the power of God, in order to root up, instead of strengthening, as most do, all these roots of bitterness. Self-will has been spoken of already. The next evil you are to oppose in children is pride. In order to guard against this, 1, Never commend them to their face, either for their goodness, sense, or beauty. It is deadly poison. It is the direct way to plunge their souls into everlasting perdition. 2, Suffer no other to do it, if you can possibly prevent it: and if any should commend them in their hearing, regard not complaisance, or good-breeding so called, but check them immediately. 3, Lovingly show them their faults, especially their wrong tempers, as soon as ever their understanding dawns.

5. In particular, labour to convince them of atheism: show them

that they are without God in the world: that they do not know God; that they do not love, delight in, or enjoy him, any more than do the beasts that perish. 5, Do not teach them revenge: never say, "Who hurts my child? Give me a blow for him." Do not encourage them in anger, by laughing at, or seeming pleased with their little froward tricks. Rather check them for the least appearance of it, much more for an angry word or action. 6, Let property be inviolably maintained among your little ones. Let none of them dare to take the very least thing, not an apple, or a pin, without, much less against the consent of the owner. 7, Do not teach them lying. Never say, "It was not my child that did so." On the contrary, inure them to confess their faults, and to tell the truth at all hazards. 8, Begin early to guard them against idolatry, against the love of the world in all its branches. Do nothing to feed in them the desire of the flesh: that is, of the pleasures of sense. Keep them on this account, (as well as on account of health,) to the plainest, simplest diet. If they do not want it as physic, let them taste no liquid till ten or twelve years old, but water or milk. Above all, let no tea come within their lips, no strong drink of any kind. If they never have it, they will never desire it. It is wholly your fault if they do. Do nothing to feed in them the desire of the eye. Let their dress also be plain and simple. Let them always (so far as your circumstances will alllow) be clean, but never fine. Let them never wear any thing that is showy, any thing that is gay and glittering. Put nothing upon them that attracts the eye, either their own, or that of others. Give them nothing, nor suffer others to give them any thing that is purely ornamental. Dress your children just as you dress yourself, that when they are grown up, they may have nothing to unlearn. More full directions on these heads, and many others, you have in the "Instructions for Children:" which I advise every parent to read again and again, and to put in practice with all his power.

6. The government of your family in general respects matters of God, and matters of the world. Your first care must be, that the living God be truly worshipped by all in your house. To this end, you must read the Scriptures, call upon the name of God among them, and catechise them in the principles of religion, that none under your roof may be ignorant of the great truths of the gospel. To this end also you must see, that they sanctify the sabbath: you must carefully and constantly bring them to the public assemblies, and examine them afterwards, how they profit thereby. If this care be wanting, you will want the blessing of God on all your other cares. Wherefore, let man and wife be principally helpful to each other in this business. When the husband is present, let him read and pray with the family, and teach them the fear of the Lord. In his absence, let his wife do these duties, or at least take care to see them done. And let both of them provide and allow convenient time and leisure for the same: and let each quicken the slackness of the other, if either begin to grow weary. If he is worse than an infidel, who provideth not food and clothing for his family, what is he that lets their souls go

naked, for want of that which is both food and clothing to them: I mean, instruction in the things that pertain to life and godliness? Herein then, let all husbands and wives be of one mind in the Lord, using all good means to plant and water piety in the hearts of all that are under their care.

7. As to matters of the world, First, they must appoint their inferiors such works and services, as they are severally fit for, and then, follow and look after them, that they may perform those services. Had not the Lord seen, that inferiors would need this, he would not have made this difference in the family. But God saw that the best servants need this help, and therefore ordained governors; generally two, that the absence of the one might be supplied by the presence of the other. Secondly, you must mark the carriage of your inferiors, and see what disorders do, or are ready to break in, whether openly or secretly, that they may be either prevented or resisted speedily. Idleness, tatling, discord, and many more evils, are apt to steal even on good servants and children, which the Lord, well knowing, made rulers in the house, to keep all in good order: and if this care be some trouble, yet the mischiefs which arise from the want of it are much more troublesome: whereas, if the eyes of the master and mistress be always open, much peace will follow in the house. Thirdly, You must join in admonishing, encouraging, reproving, and if need be, correcting your inferiors. Both must discountenance what is evil, and encourage what is good. And in so doing, you must take care to maintain each other's authority to the full. If one encourage, the other must not oppose; if one reprove, the other must not defend. If he see cause to correct the children, she must not grow angry or hinder: neither, when she would correct, must he save them out of her hands. Nay, suppose either should exceed, correcting either without cause or above measure, the other must not find fault, in the hearing of the inferiors: but they must debate the matter between themselves, and keep their disagreements from appearing in the family. So, therefore, join hands, that your dissension may not blast the fruit of all your endeavours. So shall you preserve your authority, increase your love to each other, and procure amendment in your inferiors.

CHAPTER V.

Of a Man's keeping his Authority.

1. IT is the duty of a husband to govern his wife, and to maintain her. The former implies, that he keep his authority, and that he use it. And, first, every man is bound to keep himself in that place, wherein his Maker hath set him, and to hold fast that precedency, which God hath assigned him. The Lord hath entitled him

your head, and he may not take a lower place. The contempt redounds upon God, which a man takes upon himself, by making his wife his master. But perhaps some will say, "All this is reasonable, if it were practicable. But there are some wives so proud, headstrong, and stubborn, that their husbands cannot govern them." I answer, most men blame their wives, when the real fault is in themselves. A man cannot hinder a violent women from assaulting his authority, but he may from winning it: not indeed by violence, but by skill; not by main force, but by a steady, and wise proceeding. And, First, let him endeavour to exceed his wife in goodness, as he does in place. Let him walk uprightly and religiously in his family, and give a good example to all in the house. Then any reasonable woman will give him the better place, whom she sees to be the better person. Take pains then to make thyself good, and that is the most compendious way to make thyself reverenced.

2. This in general. But in particular, shun those evils, that make a man seem vile in the eyes of those that are round about him. The first of these is bitterness: sharp, tart carriage; reviling, passionate, provoking language, are fitly so called, being as offensive to the mind, as gall and wormwood to the palate. This bitterness shows folly, and works hatred, and, therefore, must needs be a great underminer of authority. For wherever want of wisdom is, there will ensue want of reverence. He that would retain his pre-eminence, must, Secondly, avoid unthriftiness, another great enemy to reverence. Drunkenness, gaming, and ill company, are the three parts of unthriftiness. And whoever gives way to any of these, must expect to be despised. Thirdly, Lightness must be avoided by husbands; all foolish, childish behaviour, that wears no stamp of gravity or discretion, but savours of a kind of boyishness. If the husband puts a fool's coat upon his back, can he blame his wife for laughing at him? Cast therefore, all those base evils from you, and strive for holiness and gravity of conversation, that your superiority, supported by such pillars, may stand upright and unshaken.

3. But how is a man to use this authority, so that it may answer the end for which it is given? The end of it is, "that he may present her to God, holy and without blemish," that he may so govern her as to weaken every corruption, and strengthen every grace in her soul. In order to do this, he must temper the exercise of his authority, by justice, wisdom, and mildness. Justice is the life and soul of government, without which it is no better than a dead carcass: wisdom is the eye of government, without which it is like a strong man stark blind: mildness is the health and good constitution of government; and when these are all joined together, then a husband is, as it were, God in the family, a resemblance of his sovereignty and goodness.

4. Justice is to be practised in directing and recompensing. For the first, A man must not so abuse his authority, as to enjoin any thing sinful: what God commands he must not forbid; what God forbids, he must not command. Let no husband forget, that the Lord in

heaven, and the magistrate on earth, are above him. He and his wife are equally subject to these. Therefore let him never set his private authority against theirs, nor make his wife undutiful to either of these, by a false claim of duty to himself. For instance; let no husband command his wife to lie for his advantage, to break the sabbath for his gain, to partake of his fraud, or sin of any kind. Neither let any man forbid his wife to pray unto God, to attend his word and sacraments, to use any of the means, which God hath made the ordinary channel of his grace. See, then, all ye husbands, that your directions to your wives agree with the laws of God: otherwise to disobey you is the better obedience, and to reject your evil directions is not to deny subjection to your persons, but to your sins, yea, to the devil himself, who rules in you.

5. But this rule of justice must extend a little farther. The husband must not urge his authority, not only in things unlawful, but even in those that *seem* unlawful to his wife's mistaken conscience. He ought not to force her to what she thinks a sin. Conscience is God's immediate officer, and though it is mistaken, must be obeyed, till it be better informed: wherefore, when a woman, through weakness, fancies a thing indifferent to be sinful, a man must not compel her to act against her conscience, but with pity and gentleness try to remove that mistake. "But what if she pretend conscience when it is but wilfulness?" Then he must wait a while, and if persuasions avail not, at length use his authority, and enjoin her to change her obstinacy into subjection. "But how shall I know whether she be scrupulous or stubborn!" I answer, Scruple of conscience is grounded on the word of God, on some text which carries an appearance at least of condemning the thing in question. But obstinacy is backed with no part of God's word. Therefore, if a woman produce some scripture, though perhaps misinterpreted, for her scruple, she must be tenderly dealt with. But if she plead conscience, without God's word, it is properly a mere pretence. Again, it may be a mistaken conscience, when things indifferent are deemed either necessary or sinful. But if conscience be pleaded against doing what God hath plainly commanded, this is wilfulness in error, not weakness of conscience.

6. Justice is likewise to be exercised in requiting either the bad or good carriage of the wife. Bad behaviour may be requited with reproof or correction. But be sure not to reprove without a fault. Find not a fault where no fault is, for fear of making one where there was none. And observe: a fault reformed is to be accounted no fault. Therefore it must never be mentioned more. And when a real fault requires punishment, still the husband must come exceeding slowly to it, and be very seldom in it, never until he is compelled, because all other means are ineffectual. For a man to look and behave coolly towards his wife, to withdraw the testimonies of his love, to cease to trust and to speak familiarly and cheerfully to her, these things I call punishments. And all things of this kind must be more or less sharp, as the fault is greater or less, being

suited, not to the passion, or loss, or hurt of the reprover, but to the offence of the reproved. On the other hand, rewards and commendations should be proportioned to the nature and degree of her good behaviour: the husband being careful to feed her virtues, nourish her obedience, and confirm all her amiable qualities.

7. The next virtue of the husband is Wisdom, which gives rules for the right ordering his authority. It is a main part of this wisdom to conform the use of his authority, to the disposition of his wife. There is a great difference in tempers: some are more stiff, some more pliant, some are easy to be ruled, some the contrary. Some require more sharpness, others will be better wrought upon by gentleness: and wisdom teaches to frame all commands, reproofs, rewards, according to the condition of the person. A soft, tender woman must be dealt with tenderly: a rough, high-spirited one, with more sternness and severity. And herein a husband must not follow his own inclinations, but bow himself to the temper of his wife. As she is more apt to grieve or rage, to be dejected or careless, so ought a man to shape his words and behaviour, that he may most heal and least provoke those passions to which she is most liable. St. Peter points all men to this part of discretion, when he terms women the weaker vessel; meaning, subject to more natural infirmities than the man. So much the more should the husband show himself a man of knowledge toward her. Our Saviour's government may be our example. He well considers the particular nature of all his members, sees the tempers and infirmities of each, and deals with them accordingly. And his wisdom appears in mixing a fit cup of consolation or affliction for every soul. Every husband must carefully imitate this; for if some women were reproved so frequently and so sharply as others, they would be quite disheartened; and if some were to receive so great kindness and such commendations as others need, they would be utterly destroyed by pride. Now the art of government must moderate all these things, according to the nature of the governed. And this art the Giver of wisdom will not deny, to them that earnestly crave it at his hands.

8. Another part of wisdom is, to choose a fit time and place for every act of authority. Two rules may be observed with regard to time, particularly in reproving, that being a thing wherein most caution should be used, because it is most apt to be taken ill, and because if it speed well, it does much good, if not, it does much hurt. But in all other parts of government, the same rules are so needful, that much mischief will grow by not observing them. Now as in this case there are two persons concerned, so a time of reproving or commanding must be chosen, suitable to both. It must be then used when he is fit to use it well, and she to take it well. First, then, when a man himself is quiet, in tune, and free from perturbation, then probably he will reprove or command well. But when anger boils within, let him forbear exercising any part of his authority, till he recover his due temper. Authority cannot be well managed but by the hand of wisdom. Therefore, undertake not to ex-

ercise it at a time when wisdom is banished. Go not about such a work but when thou art thyself, when thy mind is settled, thy judgment clear. Then show thy wife her duty, then tell her of her faults; else she will never mend her faults, or see her duty. Choose, Secondly, the time wherein she is most capable of receiving information or reproof: when she is cheerfully quiet, well pleased, free from excessive grief, anger, pain, sickness, which often untunes the soul, then is a good time to advise or tell her of a fault. Else her passions will make her as unable to take any thing well, as his will make him unable to do it well.

9. As to place, commendations or easy commands may be given before others. But for reproofs, the most secret place is generally the most convenient. Or if you would have her do or forbear any thing, which you think will be displeasing to her to hear, tell your mind in private, and then persuade where you may freely speak of all that is fit to be spoken. "But what if women offend in public before servants, and children, and strangers?" I answer, in this case a man may show his dislike, that others may not be hurt by the bad example. But he should delay the proper, home reproof, till his wife and he be together alone.

10. Next to Wisdom is Mildness, a very necessary virtue in this society. No woman can endure her husband's government with comfort, if gentleness do not temper it. The Lord Jesus is the most gentle and meek governor in the world: and when he requireth us to take his yoke upon us, he commends himself as meek and lowly, his yoke as easy, and his burden as light. This is the best precedent for husbands to follow, the most worthy copy for them to write after. The Apostle teaches us to be gentle, not only to the good, but also to them that are froward. Surely then the husband must be gentle, toward his wife, though she be of a froward disposition. Yea, we are commanded to show all meekness to all men: much more should each man show it to his wife. And that in both the parts of authority, in directing and recompensing.

11. As to the former, the husband should beware of extending the use of his commanding power too far. Let him use it as seldom and as little as possible. It may suffice him to know, that God has given him the right of directing, in every thing which is not sinful. But in the exercise of it, he must show himself of a kind and free nature, not rigorously taking upon him to command all he may, but willingly gratifying his wife, in some, in many, in most things, that she may with the more cheerfulness be subject to him in others. Let him also show mildness in forbearing hard commandments, as much as possibly he can. Beware of crossing your wife without cause, and forcing her to things against her natural disposition. Enjoin nothing of this kind, unless there be an absolute necessity. And as to the manner of commanding, let nothing be imperiously prescribed, but with sweet kindness and familiar requests. Indeed, if the wife will try for mastery, and strive to cast off the yoke of obedience, then it is needful for the husband, with good words, to stand for his autho-

rity, even somewhat stiffly and peremptorily professing, that he will have his will in things lawful. But this course should be rarely taken, and that only in matters of importance. In other cases it is better mildly to wish this or that, than haughtily to enjoin it.

12. But mildness is never so needful as in reproving, both with regard to the matter and the manner of it. For the matter, find not fault with every foible; chide not for every infirmity. What is not of a gross nature, or done wilfully, may be passed over either with none, or half a word. The love which passeth by weaknesses is necessary toward strangers, much more with those who are so nearly united. Be not, therefore, extreme or rigorous, but be affected toward thy wife as a tender mother toward her child. Pray to God against all her faults; see and commend all her virtues: but petty wants and little ordinary weaknesses, seldom take notice of, or reprove. Let her perceive, that thou dost, but wilt not know them: and thy unwillingness to see and reprove, will make her, if she has any spark of generosity, more willing to see and reform. But an ever-lowering, and ever-chiding husband will make his wife worse than she would otherwise be. For the manner of reproving, even when it is most needful, it should be very gentle. The words and gestures used to press the fault, should be mild and amiable, breathing out love and pity at once. No patient is so desirous of health, that he will drink a potion scalding hot. So it is with reproof: if it, as it were, scald the ear with bitter upbraiding, with railing words, and a fiery look, it will never gain passage to the heart. Compassion, kindness, declaring your sorrow for her fault, desire of her good, and care for her amendment, these incline the will to accept of an admonition, and help the effect of it. I am not against the wholesome earnestness of reproving: but this may be without bitterness or fierceness. An admonition is then healthfully sharp and earnest, when a man with much plainness of speech and strength of reason, lays open the greatness and danger of the sin, and vehemently enforces them on the sinner's conscience: but compassionately still, with a declaration of more sorrow than anger, of more grief for her fault and danger, than displeasure against her person.

CHAPTER VI.

Of the Wife's peculiar Duties.

1. THE special duties of a wife may be reduced to two heads, To know herself the inferior, and behave as such. First, She must know herself the inferior; she must be thoroughly convinced, that she is not her husband's equal, without which there can be no content, either in her heart or in her house. Where the woman counts her-

self equal with her husband, (much more, if she counts herself better,) the root of all good carriage is withered, the fountain thereof dried up. Whoever, therefore, would be a good wife, let this sink into her inmost soul, "My husband is my superior, my better: he has the right to rule over me. God has given it him, and I will not strive against God. He is my superior, my better." Unless she has learned this lesson perfectly, unless she has it at her fingers' ends, if her very heart does not thoroughly agree thereto, there will be nothing between them but wrangling, repining, striving: so that their life will be little else than a continual battle, a trying for masteries. Let us grant, you may have more wit and understanding than he, more readiness of speech, more skill in business; yet consider, your servant may exceed you in all these, as much as you do him. And yet you would be loathe that your servant should claim an equality either with him or you. Know then, a man may be superior in place to him, who is his superior in gifts: and know likewise thou dost abuse the gifts of God, if thence thou infringest thy husband's superiority.—Wherefore, with all thy understanding, understand this, that God has made him thy governor and ruler, and thee his inferior, to be ruled by him, and to submit to him in all things. Though he be of meaner birth and smaller capacity, though he had no wealth or name before thou didst marry him, yet from that hour the case is changed, and he is no longer beneath thee, but above thee. Set it down, therefore, as a conclusion never to be called in question, "My husband is my superior."

2. The wife knowing herself the inferior, must, Secondly, behave as such, by reverence and subjection to her husband. First, by Reverence. She owes this to her husband as much as the children or servants do to her; yea, as they do to him: only her's is sweetened with more love and familiarity. She is no less bound to "reverence her husband," than are the rest of the family. This alone is the difference, she may be more familiar, not more rude, as being more dear, not less subject than they.

3. And this reverence must be both inward and outward. First, she must have an inward, dutiful respect for her husband. She must regard him as God's deputy, not looking to his person, but his place, nor think so much what he is, as whose officer. So the Apostle, "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." Of all things let her not fail in this. He here prescribes such a loving, not slavish fear, as stands with the closest union of heart. And from this fear she abhors and shuns, as the greatest evil which can befall her, next to the breaking the commandments of God, to displease or offend her husband. We stand in due awe of God when we loathe the breach of his commandments, as the greatest of all evils. And the wife duly stands in awe of her husband, when next to that evil she shuns the disobeying or grieving him, who is above her, next to God. I know many women care as little for their husbands, as their husbands do for them. But if thou wilt ever please God, take much pains with thy heart, to make it stand in awe of thy husband. As a

wife grows in this, so may she look to get the better of all her other infirmities: as she is careless herein, so shall she be pestered with various other evils. "But how shall she bring her heart to this?" By looking through her husband to God, the author of marriage, and putting herself often in mind, not of his deserts, but of God's ordinance. The husband is to the wife "the image and glory of God;" the power that is given to him is God's originally, and his, by God's appointment. Look not, therefore, on the qualities of thy husband, but upon his place. If thou despisest him, the contempt redounds upon God, who hath ordained him to be thy head. If, therefore, thy heart be seasoned with the fear of God, thou wilt fear thy husband also.

4. And this inward will produce outward reverence, both in her words and actions. Her words are either to himself, or of him behind his back, or to others before him. And, 1, Her words to himself should neither be sharp, sullen, passionate, nor rude, careless or contemptuous: such as show neither anger nor neglect, but all lowliness and quietness of affection. What kind of words would you dislike from a servant or child? Those must you not give your husband. For the same duty of fear is in the same words, and with the same plainness, enjoined to thee that it is to them. Indeed, a wife, as I observed before, may be more familiar: yet there is an excess of familiarity which is blame-worthy. Why should a woman be so over bold as to call her husband, *Tom*, *Ned*, *Dick?* Could she speak otherwise to her child or servant? Certainly those speeches of her's, which are most familiar, should still have a print of reverence upon them.

5. Her words also to others in his presence should be such as witness a due reverence to him. In his company she should be more cautious of her behaviour to any, than otherwise she need to be. Her words to children or servants in his sight, ought not to be loud or snappish. If she perceive a fault in them, she should remember her better stands by, and therefore not speak but upon necessity, and then utter the reproof in a milder manner than she might have done in his absence. You allow not your children or servants to be loud before you. And will you be so before your husband!

6. A wife's words likewise concerning her husband behind his back, should be dutiful and respectful. She must not talk of him with a kind of carelessness, much less with reproachful terms. Hence the Apostle recommends the example of Sarah, when she but thought of her husband, in the absence of all company, Gen. xviii. 12, reverently entitled him, *My Lord.* Who would bear a child speaking against his father behind his back? And shall it be thought sufferable in a wife? He that allows not an evil thought of the prince, will not allow evil speeches of the husband.

7. Yea, the very gestures and countenance of a wife, as well as her words, should be mixed with reverence. Both good and bad tempers have more ways of uttering themselves than by the tongue. Solomon speaks of an "eye that despiseth his mother:" so the eye

of a wife may be a despising eye, and her gestures may proclaim contempt, though her tongue be altogether silent. But rude and contemptuous behaviour, are no less uncomely than disrespectful words. Wherefore, if you condemn these in your children toward yourself, allow them not in yourself toward your husband.

8. The second duty, Subjection, implies obedience to his commands, and submission to his reproofs. The former is expressly enjoined in those words, "Let the wife be subject to her husband in all things." And, indeed, if she refuse it to him, how can she require it of the children and servants? For it is due to her only as his deputy and a substitute under him. "But how far must she be subject to him?" The Apostle tells us, "In all things in the Lord." Obedience, you see, must be universal: only so that it may be *in the Lord*. In every thing wherein obedience to him would not prove rebellion against her Maker, she is bound to obey without any further question. An English subject is not bound to obey the king in any thing but what some law enjoins. His will is no law, neither does it bind the conscience of his subject. But the husband's will is a law to his wife, and binds her conscience in all things indifferent. Nor does even this suffice, unless she obey readily, quietly, cheerfully, without brawling, contending, sourness.

9. The latter, submission to his reproofs, is also plainly required in these words, "As the church is subject to Christ, so must the wives to their own husbands in every thing." Now, bearing his reproofs is doubtless a necessary part of the Church's subjection to Christ: of consequence it is a necessary part of the wife's subjection to her husband.

CHAPTER VII.

Some Application of the whole.

1. AND First, This yields a good instruction to young, unmarried people, not to rush unadvisedly into this state. A thing of so difficult a nature, should not be so hastily undertaken. If they get not first their hearts full of grace, and their heads full of wisdom, they will find their hands full of work, a house full of trouble, and a life full of wo. Dost thou desire to be married? Unless thou wouldst meet with gall instead of honey, see what wisdom, what patience, what grace fit to govern, or fit to obey, thou findest in thyself. Get these against thou comest to use them, or marriage will yield thee small contentment. Vain youths will marry before they have any power to practise, any understanding to know their duties. But he that leaps over a broad ditch with a short staff, will fall into the

midst; and he that enters into marriage without grace, shall fall into disquietude and vexation. Let unmarried people think of this and be wise, before pain teaches them wisdom.

2. Secondly, I advise all married persons to be well acquainted with these duties, and to mark their own failings therein. Let the wife know her's, the husband his, and both the common duties. I desire they would each observe their own, and not each the other's failings. Indeed it may be feared, many will be the worse for what has been said, because they heard amiss. The husband may perhaps ring his wife a peal concerning her duty, and tell her how her faults were ripped up, and yet never consider his own. The wife may tell him of his faults, when she has little or nothing to say of herself. Thus both will be worse, while they seek to upbraid each other, and not each to amend one. Unwise man! Unwise woman! Why hast thou not the greatest care to save thy own soul? Couldst thou mark what was good for another's disease, and not what was good for thy own? Brethren, sisters, let this be altered in us. If thou be a husband, have more care to know that, for which thy own soul must answer, than what lies to the account of another. So thou that art a wife. And wo to that man or woman who sees not more failings in him or herself than in the yoke-fellow. If thy heart were right, thy own sins would be more grievous, and thy yoke-fellow's less. Learn, therefore, to pass by their failings more easily, and be more censorious toward thy own. Learn to judge thyself. He never yet learned to work well at any work, that would cast his eyes more upon his neighbour's fingers than upon his own. But oh! how common is this! Every man would be a good husband if his wife were not so bad! And she would be a good wife if her husband were tolerable. All the accusations, all the judgings, are darted at each other: but what folly is this? Idle man or woman, it is not the requiring duty from another, but the performing what belongs to thyself, that will make thee a Christian, that will comfort thee in temptation, rejoice thee in death, and stand for thee in judgment.

3. In a word: Know thy own duty, mark thy own failings, and thou wilt not quarrel with thy yoke-fellow. There is no better mean of peace than for every one to learn his own work, and labour to mend his own faults. Have you then both been to blame? Repent both, and strain not courtesy which shall begin. Hast thou been a foolish, passionate, or an unkind husband, not regarding thy wife's good? Cry not, "She has been thus and thus;" but repent of thy own sin. Seriously confess it to God. Beseech him to make thee a better husband, that she may be a better wife. Hast thou been a brawling, disobedient, or discontented wife? Ask thy heart before God, and dissemble not. If so, clamour not against thy husband, exclaim not against his passion or unkindness, but condemn thyself, and call upon God, to make thee reverence and obey thy husband, as a commander under him. Entreat him to make thee a better wife, that he may be a better husband. Let each mend one, I mean himself, and contention will cease. Pray each for

yourself first, then for the other: labour to see wherein yourself have offended; be not skilful to cast the fault upon another, but to cast it out of yourself. So shall your loves be sure, your lives comfortable, your deaths happy, and your memories blessed for ever.

4. Before I conclude, it may not be improper to sum up the duty of married persons, as parents and as masters. Their duty as parents, respects either the temporal or the spiritual good of their children. With regard to the former, you owe them protection and provision of necessaries, according to that rank and degree wherein God hath placed you. You are carefully to protect your children from all the evils and dangers to which infancy, childhood, and youth, are exposed. You are also to nourish and sustain them; not only to provide for them for the present, but to take care for their future subsistence. If you have not a patrimony to leave them, it behooves you to leave them an art or calling, whereby through diligence, with the blessing of God, they may procure food convenient for them. In the choice of this calling you should chiefly have an eye to their general Christian calling, and consider not so much what will conduce most to their temporal profit or honour, as what will most effectually advance their spiritual and eternal interest. This is a weighty point: it would be well if all parents would deeply lay it to heart. It should next be considered, whether the calling proposed be suitable to their genius and inclination; which are to be consulted on this head, only not as much as their eternal welfare.

5. With regard to their spiritual good, your first labour of love is, to present them to God in baptism. You are then to inure them to good, to instruct and admonish them, to educate them in the knowledge and fear of God, to season their minds as early as possible with the fundamental truths of religion, and in such a manner as is best suited to their capacity, to train them up in all holiness. Every instruction should be seconded by example. Let them continually see, as well as hear, how they ought to walk acceptably, and to please God. Be peculiarly careful to set before your children the copies and patterns of the virtues, which you teach. And let them neither see nor hear any thing from you which you would not desire to have copied by them. Even a heathen, and none of the most virtuous, could say, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.* We ought to reverence and stand in awe of children, that nothing may be spoken or done in their sight, which may taint their tender minds. They are prone to imitate any; but more especially those who are so nearly related to them: which undoubtedly they will be most ready to do, when example strikes in with their natural propensity to evil.

6. If neither good examples nor instructions will prevail, then correction becomes a duty. And this should first be given in words, before you proceed to severer methods: yet not in railing, or foul or bitter language, but in calm and sober reproof. If that fail too, then use the rod. But whenever this correction is given, let it be with all the expressions of love and concern which the nature of the thing will admit. Let it be timely, before ill habits are con-

tracted, at least, before they have room to take root: and let it be moderate, not exceeding the quality of the fault, or the tenderness of the child. Immoderate, or ill-natured and passionate correction, is so far from profiting children, that it very frequently frets and sharpens their spirits, and makes them more stubborn and untractable. If they are of a softer temper, it frights and dispirits them This is also a natural effect of a sour, harsh, unkind behaviour. Hence those solemn cautions of the Apostle, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath," Eph. vi. 4. Avoid whatever tends thereto. Use no demeanor, no actions, or words, or way of speaking, which has such a tendency. And again, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged," Col. iii. 21. It is a different word from that used in the former text, Μη ερεθιζετε. Do not purposely fret or teaze them, lest you should dishearten them too much, lest you should destroy their courage and vigour of mind, and make them of a faint, fearful, dastardly spirit. The direction doubtless belongs to both the parents, but is more immediately addressed to fathers, as they are generally of rougher and harsher spirits than the mothers, and not so much restrained by natural fondness. Lastly, correction must not be given in anger; if it be so, it will lose its effect on the child, who will think he is corrected, not because he has done a fault, but because the parent is angry.

7. These directions chiefly relate to young children. But even after they are grown up, you are still engaged to watch over their souls, to observe how they practise the precepts which have been inculcated upon them from time to time, and to exhort, encourage, and reprove them accordingly. You are also to bless them, first by your prayers. Parents are under a peculiar obligation, by daily and earnest prayer to commend their children to God's protection and blessing. You are, Secondly, to bless them by your piety. See that you be such persons in all holy conversation, that from you the blessing of God may descend upon your posterity.

8. As masters, you are, 1, To be just to your servants, whether apprentices, journeymen, or household servants, in faithfully and exactly performing the conditions on which they engaged to serve you: particularly with regard to food, and the other necessaries and conveniences of life. You are, 2, To admonish and reprove them for their faults, more especially faults against God. But let this be done with all tenderness and mildness, *forbearing* not only bitter and opprobrious language, but even *threatening, knowing that your Master is in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with him.* You are, 3, To set a good example to your servants, otherwise reproving will be but lost labour. It is your duty, 4, To provide them with all means of necessary instruction, and to allow them sufficient time to worship God in private as well as in public. You are, 5, To beware that you give them only reasonable and moderate commands, that you do not make their service toilsome to them, by laying on them greater burdens than they can bear, or greater than you would impose, or they would bear, if they were not of the household of faith. Lastly,

You are to encourage them in well-doing, by using them with that kindness which their faithfulness, diligence, and piety, deserve: in all your dealings with them remembering, you are to give an account to your Master of the usage of your meanest servant.

DIRECTIONS TO CHILDREN.

1. "CHILDREN," says the Apostle, writing to the Ephesians, chap. vi. ver. 1, "obey your parents in the Lord." To which he adds, "Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise," (with a particular promise annexed; for the promise annexed to the second commandment, does not belong to the keeping that command in particular, but the whole law:) "that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth." And this promise is by no means to be confined to the time of the Jewish dispensation. On the contrary, there are not wanting many instances, even in later times, of persons eminently dutiful to their parents, who have been rewarded with eminent health and prosperity. Though still it is acknowledged, that this promise, as most others, may be understood under the Christian dispensation, in a spiritual and more exalted sense.

2. But how are children to *honour their fathers and mothers?* First, by reverencing them. This is an unquestionable duty, manifestly contained in the very term honour. And this inward reverence is to appear, in the whole outward behaviour. It is to be expressed both in their speeches and gestures, in their words and actions. Their speech should always testify honour, giving them the most respectful titles which their condition will bear. Likewise (unless on some peculiar occasions) your words before them should be few: For talkativeness before any person, has the appearance of disrespect. You should also conduct yourself with all lowliness and modesty, while in the presence of your parents: so that your whole carriage may be the natural expression of the respect lodged in your hearts.

3. This reverence is not to be withheld, on account of either their supposed or real infirmities. For be the faults of the parents ever so great, this gives the children no authority to despise them: seeing whatever their tempers or their behaviour be, they are your parents still. Neither are you to take any step which might cause others to despise them. You cannot, therefore, mention their faults to others, without bringing guilt upon your own soul. You cannot mention them behind their back, and be guiltless. It is your part to conceal all their faults and infirmities, to the uttermost of your power.

Be not like Ham, who betrayed his father's nakedness, and was cursed of God to his latest posterity. Rather imitate the piety of Japheth and Shem: cover with all care whatever you disapprove of in a parent. Hide it from every one else, and, if it were possible, even from yourself.

4. A second duty which children owe to their parents is love. We are to bear them a deep, real kindness, and earnest, tender good-will, heartily desiring all manner of good to them, and abhorring to speak or do any thing, which might give them uneasiness. This will appear no more than common gratitude, if we remember, what our parents have done for us. That they were the instruments not only of bringing us into the world, but also of sustaining us after: and certainly they that weigh the cares and fears which attend the bringing up of a child, will judge the love of the child to be but a moderate return for them. This love is to be expressed several ways. First, in all kindness of behaviour, carrying ourselves, not barely with awe and respect, but with tenderness and affection. It is to be expressed, Secondly, in praying for them. The debt which a child owes to a parent, is so inconceivably great, that he can never hope fully to discharge it himself. He is, therefore, to seek the assistance of God, and continually to beg him that has all power in heaven and earth, to return, whatever good his parents have done him, seven-fold into their own bosom.

5. A third duty which children owe to their parents, is obedience. As this is plainly implied in the fifth commandment, so it is expressly enjoined by the Apostle: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," Eph. vi. 1; and again, "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to the Lord," Col. iii. 20. We owe them obedience in all things, unless where their commands are contrary to the commands of God. In every thing of an indifferent nature, whatever they enjoin we are to do. The case is the same with regard to the authority of parents over their children, as with regard to that of husbands over their wives. The will of your parent is a law to you, as soon as it is signified to you. You are to comply with it immediately, not for wrath, not only to avoid this, but also for conscience' sake. Such is the will of God concerning you: so high is the authority which he hath intrusted them with.

6. And yet we are to obey them only *in the Lord:* only so far as consists with his authority over us. Therefore, if any of their commands are contrary to the commands of God, in that case our duty to God must be preferred. If, therefore, any parent should be so wicked, as to require his child to steal, to lie, or to do any thing unlawful, the child offends not against his duty, though he disobey that command. Nay, he must disobey; otherwise he offends against a higher duty, even that which every child of man owes to his Father which is in Heaven. Yet when it is necessary to refuse obedience, it should be done in so modest and respectful a manner, that it may plainly appear, not stubbornness, but conscience is the ground of that refusal. Let this appear, likewise, by your ready and cheerful

compliance with all their lawful commands; as well knowing, that wherever the command of a parent is not contrary to any command of God, there the child is in conscience bound to obey, whether in a weightier or a lighter matter.

7. Nothing, therefore, but the unlawfulness of their command, can excuse the disobeying our parents. If any instance of disobedience is more inexcusable than others, it is the marrying against, or even without their consent. Indeed, parents have so peculiar a right to their children, that to give themselves away without their allowance, is not only a high act of disobedience, but of flagrant injustice. And hence we see, that among God's ancient people, if a young woman had even made a vow, she was not suffered to perform it, without the consent of the parent; Numb. xxx. 5. Indeed children ought to have a negative voice, and not be compelled to marry without their own consent. But if they marry without the consent of their parents, let them expect no blessing from God.

8. A fourth duty which children owe to their parents, is the assisting them in their wants, of what kind soever they be, whether sickness or weakness of body, decay of understanding, or lowness of estate. In all these the child is bound to assist them according to his ability. For the two former, weakness of body and infirmity of mind, none can doubt of the duty, when they remember how every child did, in his infancy, receive the same benefits from his parents. The child then had no strength to support, no understanding to guide itself. But the care of the parent supplied both these: and, therefore, in common gratitude, when either of these becomes the parent's case, the child is to perform the same office again. Likewise, as to the relieving their poverty, it is but just to sustain thy parents, who formerly sustained thee. And that this is also implied in "honouring our father and mother," our Lord himself teaches. For when he accuses the Pharisees of rejecting the commandment of God that they might cleave to their own traditions, he instances in this particular, concerning the relieving of parents. Hence it is manifest, this is a part of the duty, which is enjoined in the fifth commandment. And such a duty it is, that no pretence whatever can release us from the performance of it. This should be carefully observed. No fault of the parent can acquit a child of this duty. For as St. Peter tells servants, that they must *be subject*, out of conscience toward God, not only to *good and gentle* masters, *but also to the froward:* so certainly it concerns children, to perform every instance of filial duty, not only to kind and virtuous parents, but to the harshest and wickedest. For though gratitude to a kind and tender parent, be a forcible motive to make a child pay his duty, yet that is not the principal, and much less the only ground for it. This is laid in the authority of God, who commands us to honour our parents. And, therefore, were we to suppose a parent to have been so unnatural, as never to have done any thing to oblige a child, yet notwithstanding this the commandment of God would remain in its full force: and what is prescribed therein we are bound to perform, whether the tie of gratitude be added or not.

DIRECTIONS TO SERVANTS.

1. ST. PAUL confirms his direction to masters by that consideration, that they also "have a Master in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him." He regards no man's outward condition: the poor and the rich are the same to him, and the servant is as his master. And the Apostle, it seems, had learned of him, to be "without respect of persons." For he has the same care for servants, as for their masters, and is as large in his advices to them: nay, much more so; probably considering, that they had fewer advantages of education, and fewer opportunities of instruction. He is, therefore, remarkably particular in his directions to these, which are given at large in the epistle to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians. He gives them farther directions in the first epistle to Timothy, and again in the epistle to Titus. If we add hereto the advices given them by St. Peter, we shall have a full account of the duties of Christian servants.

2. The great duty required of all servants is, subjection or obedience to their masters. So St. Peter, 1 Pet. ii. 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters;" St. Paul, "Exhort servants to be subject to their own masters:" and again, both to the Ephesians and Colossians, Eph. vi. 5, Col. iii. 22, "Servants, obey your masters after the flesh." Allowing that these are your masters only in a qualified sense, and only during this state of flesh and blood; allowing you have but one proper, absolute Master, to whom you owe unlimited subjection; yet to these also, as being invested with a part of his power, you owe a limited obedience and subjection.

3. Indeed this obedience varies according to the various kinds of service, wherein servants are connected with their masters. The sorts of servants most common among us are, 1. Labourers, or workmen, with whom we agree by the day, to do such work at such a price, and who accordingly serve us during that time. 2. Journeymen, whom we agree with for a longer space, to assist us in our calling on certain conditions. 3. Household servants, who usually contract by the year, to perform, on the considerations specified, either some particular branch of household work, or (if there be only one servant) all manner of work whatever, that from time to time is needful to be done in the family. 4. Apprentices, who are engaged for several years, chiefly to serve their masters in their particular trade or calling. Now, how far are all or any of these obliged, in conscience, to "obey, and be subject to their own masters?"

4. The Apostle answers. During the time agreed, "Obey your masters after the flesh in all things:" that is, in all things specified

in that agreement, which was made when you entered into service. So a labourer, or workman is, during this short service, to follow the direction of him that hired him. A journeyman is to do the same, with regard to that work, which he agreed to perform. Domestic servants (to whom St. Peter speaks, for this is the proper meaning of οἱ οἰκέται) are obliged to obey their master or mistress, either in one branch of household business, if they contracted for this, or otherwise with respect to the whole work of the house: doing every thing at such times, and in such a manner, as is appointed by their superior. And an apprentice is to obey, according to the terms of his indenture, wherein it is usually agreed, by his parents or friends, in what kind of service he shall be employed, according to the discretion of his master.

5. To sum up this.* The first part of a servant's obedience is, to forbear doing things of his own head, without or against the consent of his master: the reason whereof is plain. During the time of his service, he is not his own; neither ought the things he does to be for himself. Both his person and his actions are all his master's; and the will of his master is his rule. In particular, servants, 1. May not go whither they will, but only where they are ordered, or, at least, permitted to go. 2. They ought not to do their own business. When Jacob was Laban's servant, though he had flocks of his own, yet he fed his master's flocks, and committed his own to his sons, Gen. xxx. 35, 36. 3. They are not to do what business they please themselves, but what is allotted them by their master. 4. They ought not to marry, while the time of their service lasts, without the consent of their master. 5. They may not, before their covenanted time expires, go away from their master.

6. The second part of a servant's obedience is, to do whatever his master commands. To "look to the hand of his master," (as David speaks,) ready to execute any thing he would have done. He is also to obey, by hearkening to his instructions, not only in matters of his secular calling, but likewise in the things of God, in whatever concerns his Christian calling.

7. The manner, wherein this obedience is to be performed, is largely declared by both the Apostles. "Obey your masters, (saith St. Paul,) with fear and trembling." This, indeed, is not to be taken literally: it is a proverbial expression, denoting the utmost care, watchfulness, and diligence. Do it fearing God; from a principle of loving fear, a fear of offending your Master, who is in heaven. "Be subject to your masters with all fear," saith St. Peter, with earnest, tender reverence,—with a constant fear, either of injuring, grieving, or displeasing them, by any part of your behaviour.

8. So proper is this fear of his master in a servant, that the want of it is a denial of his master's place and power.† This God intimates in that expostulation, Mal. i. 6, "If I be a master, where is

* Several of the following paragraphs are partly extracted from Mr. Gouge on Domestic Duties.

† See Mr. Gouge.

custom of the trade is nothing to you, nor the example of those that work with you. Do as much to-day as you can without hurting yourself, or disabling you from doing the same to-morrow: and just as much as you would if it were your own work, or if you were to be paid by the piece. Do the same thing, if you are a household servant; putting forth all your strength, ridding away all the business that you can, and using therein all the understanding which God has given you, in order to do every thing in the most excellent manner whereof you are capable.

16. These general directions all servants are to observe, of conscience toward God, and that whether their masters be good or bad, heathens, (in fact, if not in name,) or Christians. For the character of the master, while he is such, does not vacate the duty of the servant. Suppose they are mere heathens, men that neither love, nor fear, nor serve God, (a very possible case even in what we call a Christian country;) still "let as many servants as are under the yoke, (for the service of these is a yoke indeed) count their masters worthy of all honour," 1 Tim. vi. 1. Though they are unbelieving and unholy, yet in consideration of the place which God has assigned them, for his sake, and in obedience to his appointment, "count them worthy of all the honour" above described. Pay them all the reverence in your heart, and show them all that outward respect, both in word and action, "that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" by those ungodly men, who would not fail to lay the blame of your neglect on the religion which you profess. On the other hand, "as many as have faithful masters," real believers in Christ, let not this administer any pretence for less exactness in their duty. Let them not despise them, because they are brethren. Let them not on this account abate any thing of the inward reverence they owe, or of their outward respect and obedience: "but rather do them service," observing the preceding directions with regard to them, more earnestly and exactly, "because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit," enjoying the same communion with God on earth, and looking for the same inheritance in heaven.

17. But besides these general ones, there are several particular directions given by the Apostle to all Christian servants. As, 1. "Be honest, not purloining," Tit. ii. 10, not secreting, or privately *keeping back* any thing for yourself; not taking, using, disposing, or giving away the least thing belonging to your master, without his leave, without his knowledge and consent first asked and obtained. To do otherwise is no better than plain theft, and cuts off all pretensions to honesty. Equally dishonest is it to hurt or waste any thing, or to let it be lost through your carelessness or negligence. Whatever, therefore, your fellow-servants do, keep yourself pure; and let not the custom of the world, but the word of God, be the rule of all your actions.

18. Secondly, *Be true*, not barely, tell no wilful lie, either to your master or your fellow-servants, but let "all your conversation be in simplicity and godly sincerity. Even if you are overtaken in a fault

use no deceit, no equivocating or prevarication to hide it, or to excuse either yourself or any of your fellow-servants, or to prevent anger that may ensue. Herein also St. Peter observes, "Christ left you an example that ye might tread in his steps." "He not only did," committed, "no sin, but there was no guile found in his mouth." Let there be none found in your's: in spite of all temptations to the contrary, "speak the truth from your heart," and whatever inconveniences spring herefrom, God will turn them all into blessings.

19. Thirdly, "Be faithful:" as St. Paul expresses it, "show all good fidelity," Tit. ii. 10. This is good, beautiful, honourable in all men. It ennobles the lowest station, and causes it to shine in the eyes of God and man. Be faithful, 1, With regard to your master's goods; preserving, yea, and increasing them to the uttermost of your power. Whatever is committed to your trust, whether within doors or without, so carefully preserve that it be not lost, spoiled, or impaired, under your hands. If you see any damage done to your master's goods, redress it yourself, if you can: if you cannot, immediately make it known to your master, that he may find means of redressing it. And not only preserve, but do all that in you lies to increase your master's goods. The talents which were committed to the faithful servants, were by their industry increased to as many more. So that it is not sufficient not to lessen your master's substance, but you should labour to better it. Study his interest as you would your own, and promote it by all possible means. Regard not your pleasure, your ease, nor any thing but your conscience in comparison of it. Be faithful, 2, With regard to his reputation. Conceal his faults and infirmities as far as possible. Some of these you can hardly avoid observing, being continually under his roof. But whatever you observe of this kind, keep it in your own breast. Let it go no farther; reveal it not to strangers, no, not even to your fellow-servants. Never make either his supposed or real failings the subjects of your discourse. Beware you do not wound him behind his back, nor suffer others to do it in your presence. Endure no tatling or talebearing concerning him in the family, but prevent or stop it with all diligence. Whenever you can do it consistently with truth, and so far as you can, defend him: and in every point be just as tender of his character as of your own. To this head may be referred, faithfulness in keeping the secrets of your master. Many of these you cannot but know, by reason of the close connexion which is between you, your continually abiding so near together, and the many employments he has for you. All these, therefore, you are carefully to conceal, provided they tend not to the dishonour of God, or to the danger of the church or commonwealth, or indeed of any private person. For Jonathan is commended for discovering the mischief which Saul had secretly intended against David, 1 Sam. xx. 12. Be faithful, 3, With regard to his soul. With all the plainness which your station allows, and yet with all respect and humility "rebuke, and suffer not sin upon him." The time, the manner, and the other circumstances relating to this difficult task, God will give

you to choose aright, if your eye be single, and you seek his direction by earnest prayer.

20. Fourthly, *Be patient.* In your patience *possessing your souls*, steadily follow the preceding directions, and be thus subject, not only to the good and gentle masters, but also to the froward: to those who are neither good nor gentle, who have neither religion nor good nature; that it may appear you do your service unto the Lord, and not unto men. But it may be proper, in the meantime, to observe, that the state of English servants is widely different from the state of those to whom St. Paul and St. Peter wrote. Many of those, (perhaps the greater part,) were slaves, who, by the miserable constitution of their country, were the absolute property of their masters, as much as were his sheep and oxen. Therefore, it was not in their power to leave or change their masters, but they were constrained to stay with them till death. Consequently those directions were peculiarly necessary for those, who were in such a situation: "This is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do dwell, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God," 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20. But to those who are born under a happier constitution, undoubtedly the first advice should be, "If thou mayest be free," from a froward, ill-natured man, then use it rather. Do not bind yourself at all, if you can honestly avoid it, (as you generally may,) to any one, who, you have reason to believe, is an unjust, or an unmerciful man. And if you are bound to such an one already, yet if you should "suffer wrongfully" from him; "if you do well," and suffer notwithstanding, it is by no means your duty to endure it. Rather it is your duty to appeal to the magistrate, who is the minister of God to you for good, and to desire of him such a remedy as the laws of your country allow. In this manner "commit yourself" and your cause "to him, that judgeth righteously." But even in this case, till you are free from the unrighteous man, remember the example Christ hath left, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not." How much more should you tread in these his steps, with regard to things of smaller moment, to those inconsiderable instances either of injustice or unkindness, which are to be expected in almost every family, and for which even our laws provide no remedy? Here undoubtedly you are called to suffer: and see that you do so with all meekness and gentleness. Not only "when you are reviled, revile not again," but "answer not again," Tit. ii. 10. Open not your mouth, unless silence might have the appearance of sullenness or disrespect: and then do it in as few words as the matter will bear, and with all the softness you are master of.

21. Before he closes the subject, St. Paul does not fail to remind you, what great encouragement you have, to persevere in all these duties of your station, whatever difficulties you meet with therein. For hereby you "may adorn the gospel of God our Saviour in all

things." So strong an expression is scarcely to be found in all the writings of the Apostle, when he speaks to persons of the highest rank, as he here uses to men of low degree. You, therefore, are peculiarly called of God to be an honour to your profession of Christianity; to show what manner of men they are who serve the Lord Christ. See, then, that you, in particular, walk *circumspectly*, accurately, exactly, that either your unbelieving masters may be won by your conversation, or at least believers confirmed and comforted.

22. Still further encouragement you have in "knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance;" that inheritance reserved for you in heaven, which is of infinitely greater value than any which your master now enjoys, or any which you can receive on earth. You know that the day is coming when your common master will descend in the clouds of heaven. And you are assured in that day, "Whatsoever good thing a man hath done," while he was "serving God in his generation, the same shall he receive from the Lord, whether he be bond or free:" "The same," —that is, a reward proportionable thereto, in an additional degree of glory. Therefore, let nothing be wanting now. "Work your work betimes, and in his time he will give you your reward." Now be honest, be true, be faithful, be patient. Now "obey your masters with fear, yea, with fear and trembling." Do them service with singleness of heart, with good-will, with your whole soul. Do this for the honour of the gospel, for the glory of God your Saviour, for the present good of your own soul, and for the increase of your eternal inheritance.

PREFACE.

1. A Gentleman in the West of England informed me a few days ago, that a Clergyman in his neighbourhood designed to print, in two or three volumes, the Sermons which had been published in the ten volumes of the ARMINIAN MAGAZINE. I had been frequently solicited to do this, and had as often answered, "I leave this for my Executors." But if it must be done before I go hence, methinks I am the properest person to do it.

2. I intend, therefore, to set about it without delay. And if it please GOD to continue to me a little longer the use of my understanding and memory, I know not that I can employ them better. And, perhaps, I may be better able than another to revise my own writings: in order either to retrench what is redundant, to supply what is wanting, or to make any farther alterations which shall appear needful.

3. To make these plain discourses more useful, I purpose now to range them in proper order: placing those first which are intended to throw light on some important Christian doctrines: and afterward those which more directly relate to some branch of Christian practice. And I shall endeavour to place them all in such an order that one may illustrate and confirm the other. There may be the greater need of this, because they were occasionally written during a course of years, without any order or connexion at all; just as this or the other subject either occurred to my own mind, or was suggested to me at various times by one or another friend.

4. To increase the number of sermons in each volume, I have added six sermons to those printed in the Magazines. And I did this the rather, because the subjects were important, and cannot be too much insisted on.

5. Is there need to apologize to sensible persons, for the plainness of my style? A gentleman, whom I much love and respect, lately informed me, with much tenderness and courtesy, that "men of candour made great allowance for the decay of my faculties; and did not expect me to write now, either with regard to sentiment or language, as I did thirty or forty years ago." Perhaps they are decayed, though I am not conscious of it. But is not this a fit occasion to explain myself, concerning the style I use, from choice, not necessity? I *could* even now write as floridly and rhetorically as the admired Dr. B—. But I dare not, because I seek the honour that cometh of God only! What is the praise of man to *me*, that have one foot in the grave, and stepping into the land whence I shall not return? Therefore, I dare no more write in a *fine style* than wear a fine coat. But were it otherwise, had I time to spare, I should still

write just as I do. I should purposely decline what many admire, a highly-ornamented style. I cannot admire French oratory: I despise it from my heart. Let those that please be in raptures at the pretty, elegant sentences of Massillon or Bourdaloue; but give me the plain, nervous style of Dr. South, Dr. Bates, or Mr. John Howe. And for elegance, show me any French writer who exceeds Dean Young, or Mr. Seed. Let who will admire the French frippery: I am still for plain, sound English.

6. I think a preacher, or a writer of sermons, has lost his way, when he imitates any of the French orators: even the most famous of them, even Massillon or Bourdaloue. Only let his language be plain, proper, and clear, and it is enough. God himself has told us how to speak, both as to the matter and the manner: *If any man speak*, in the name of God, *let him speak as the oracles of God.* And if he would imitate any part of these above the rest, let it be the first epistle of St. John. This is the style, the most excellent style, for every gospel preacher. And let him aim at no more ornament than he finds in that sentence, which is the sum of the whole gospel, "We love Him, because He hath first loved us."

London, Jan. 1, 1788.

SERMON LVIII.

ON THE ETERNITY OF GOD.

"*From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art* GOD."—PSALM XC. 2.

1. I WOULD fain speak of that awful subject, ETERNITY. But how can we grasp it in our thought? It is so vast, that the narrow mind of man is utterly unable to comprehend it. But does it not bear some affinity to another incomprehensible thing, immensity? May not space, though an unsubstantial thing, be compared with another unsubstantial thing, duration? But what is immensity? It is boundless space. And what is eternity? It is boundless duration.

2. Eternity has generally been considered as divisible into two parts: which have been termed eternity *a parte ante*, and eternity *a parte post:* that is, in plain English, that eternity which is past, and that eternity which is to come. And does there not seem to be an intimation of this distinction in the text? *Thou art God from everlasting:*—Here is an expression of that eternity which is past. *To everlasting:*—Here is an expression of that eternity which is to come. Perhaps indeed some may think it is not strictly proper to say, there is an eternity that is past. But the meaning is easily understood: we mean thereby, duration which had no beginning; as by eternity to come, we mean that duration which will have no end.

3. It is God alone who, (to use the exalted language of Scripture,) *inhabiteth eternity*, in both these senses. The great Creator alone, (not any of his creatures,) is *from everlasting to everlasting:* it is his duration alone, as it had no beginning, so it cannot have any end. On this consideration it is, that one speaks thus, in addressing *Immanuel*, GOD WITH US:—

> "Hail, GOD the SON, with glory crown'd,
> E'er time began to be;
> Thron'd with thy SIRE through half the round
> Of wide eternity!"

And again,

> "Hail, GOD the SON, with glory crown'd,
> When time shall cease to be:
> Thron'd with the FATHER through the round
> Of whole Eternity!"

4. "Ere time began to be."—But what is *time?* It is not easy to say, as frequently as we have had the word in our mouths. We

know not what it properly is: we cannot well tell how to define it. But is it not in some sense a fragment of eternity broken off at both ends? That portion of duration which commenced when the world began, which will continue as long as this world endures, and then expire for ever? That portion of it which is at present measured by the revolution of the sun and planets, lying, (so to speak,) between two eternities, that which is past, and that which is to come. But as soon as the heavens and the earth flee away from the face of Him that sitteth on the great white throne, time will be no more, but sink for ever into the ocean of eternity.

5. But by what means can a mortal man, the creature of a day, form any idea of eternity? What can we find within the compass of nature to illustrate it by? With what comparison shall we compare it? What is there that bears any resemblance to it? Does there not seem to be some sort of analogy between boundless duration and boundless space? The great Creator, the infinite Spirit, inhabits both the one and the other. This is one of his peculiar prerogatives: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" Yea, not only the utmost regions of creation, but all the expanse of boundless space! Meantime, how many of the children of men may say,

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to that heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell!"

6. But leaving one of these unbounded seas to the Father of eternity, to whom alone duration without beginning belongs, let us turn our thoughts on duration without end. This is not an incommunicable attribute of the great Creator; but he has been graciously pleased to make innumerable multitudes of his creatures partakers of it. He has imparted this not only to angels, and archangels, and all the companies of heaven, who are not intended to die, but to glorify Him and live in his presence for ever: but also to the inhabitants of the earth, who dwell in houses of clay. Their bodies indeed are "crushed before the moth," but their souls will never die. God made them, as an ancient writer speaks, to be *pictures of his own eternity*. Indeed all spirits, we have reason to believe, are clothed with immortality: having no inward principle of corruption, and being liable to no external violence.

7. Perhaps we may go a step further still. Is not matter itself, as well as spirit, in one sense eternal? Not indeed *a parte ante*, as some senseless philosophers, both ancient and modern, have dreamed. Not that any thing had existed from eternity; seeing, if so, it must be God. Yea, it must be the One God; for it is impossible there should be two Gods, or two Eternals. But although nothing beside the Great God, can have existed from everlasting, none else can be eternal *a parte ante;* yet there is no absurdity in supposing that all

creatures are eternal, *a parte post*. All matter indeed is continually changing, and that into ten thousand forms. But that it is changeable does in nowise imply that it is perishable. The substance may remain one and the same, though under innumerable different forms. It is very possible any portion of matter may be resolved into the atoms of which it was originally composed. But what reason have we to believe, that one of these atoms ever was, or ever will be annihilated? It never can, unless by the uncontrolable power of its Almighty Creator. And is it probable that ever he will exert this power, in unmaking any of the things that he hath made? In this also, God is "not a man that he should repent." Indeed every creature under heaven does and must continually change its form, which we can now easily account for; as it clearly appears from late discoveries, that ethereal fire enters into the composition of every part of the creation. Now this is essentially *edax rerum*. It is the universal menstruum, the dissolver of all things under the sun. By the force of this, even the strongest, the firmest bodies are dissolved. It appears from the experiment, repeatedly made by the great Lord Bacon, that even diamonds by a high degree of heat, may be turned into dust. And that in a still higher degree, (strange as it may seem) they will totally flame away. Yea, by this the heavens themselves will be dissolved; "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." But they will only be dissolved; not destroyed: they will melt: but they will not perish. Though they lose their present form, yet not a particle of them will ever lose its existence: but every atom of them will remain under one form or other to all eternity.

8. But still we would inquire, What is this eternity? How shall we pour any light upon this abstruse subject? It cannot be the object of our understanding. And with what comparison shall we compare it? How infinitely does it transcend all these? What are any temporal things placed in comparison with those that are eternal? What is the duration of the long-lived oak, of the ancient castle, of Trajan's pillar, of Pompey's amphitheatre? What is the antiquity of the Tuscan urns, though probably older than the foundation of Rome; yea, of the pyramids of Egypt, suppose they have remained upwards of three thousand years, when laid in the balance with eternity? It vanishes into nothing. Nay, what is the duration of "the everlasting hills," figuratively so called, which have remained ever since the general deluge, if not from the foundation of the world, in comparison of eternity? No more than an insignificant cipher. Go further yet. Consider the duration, from the creation of the first-born sons of God, of Michael the archangel in particular, to the hour when he shall be commissioned to sound his trumpet, and to utter his mighty voice through the vault of heaven, "Arise, ye dead, and come to Judgment!" Is it not a moment, a point, a nothing, in comparison of unfathomable eternity? Add to this a thousand, a million of years, add a million of million of "ages, before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth and the round world were made:" what is all this in comparison of that eternity which is

past? Is it not less, infinitely less, than a single drop of water to the whole ocean? Yea, immeasurably less than a day, an hour, a moment, to a million of ages. Go back a thousand millions still: yet you are no nearer the beginning of eternity.

9. Are we able to form a more adequate conception of eternity to come? In order to this, let us compare it with the several degrees of duration which we are acquainted with. An ephemeron fly lives six hours, from six in the evening till twelve. This is a short life compared to that of a man, which continues threescore or fourscore years. And this itself is short, if it be compared to the nine hundred and sixty-nine years of Methuselah. Yet what are these years, yea, all that have succeeded each other, from the time that the heavens and the earth were erected, to the time when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth with the works of it shall be burnt up, if we compare it to the length of that duration which never shall have an end!

10. In order to illustrate this, a late author has repeated that striking thought of St. Cyprian. Suppose there were a ball of sand as large as the globe of earth: suppose a grain of this sand were to be annihilated, reduced to nothing, in a thousand years; yet that whole space of duration, wherein this ball would be annihilating, at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, would bear infinitely less proportion to eternity, duration without end, than a single grain of sand would bear to all the mass.

11. To infix this important point the more deeply in your mind, consider another comparison. Suppose the ocean to be so enlarged as to include all the space between the earth and the starry heavens. Suppose a drop of this water to be annihilated once in a thousand years: yet that whole space of duration, wherein this ocean is annihilating, at the rate of one drop in a thousand years, would be infinitely less in proportion to eternity, than one drop of water to that whole ocean.

Look then at those immortal spirits, whether they are in this or the other world. When they shall have lived thousands of thousands of years, yea, millions of millions of ages, their duration will be but just begun: they will be only upon the threshold of eternity.

12. But besides this division of eternity into that which is past, and that which is to come, there is another division of eternity, which is of unspeakable importance. That which is to come, as it relates to immortal spirits, is either happy or miserable eternity.

13. See the spirits of the righteous that are already praising God in a happy eternity. We are ready to say, How short will it appear to those who drink of the rivers of pleasure at God's right hand! We are ready to cry out,

> "A day without night,
> They dwell in his sight,
> And Eternity seems as a day!"

But this is only speaking after the manner of men. For the mea-

sures of long and short are only applicable to time, which admits of bounds, and not to unbounded duration. This rolls on (according to our low conceptions) with unutterable, inconceivable swiftness; if one would not rather say, it does not roll or move at all, but is one still, immoveable ocean. For the inhabitants of heaven "cease not day or night," but "continually cry, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD, the GOD, the ALMIGHTY, who was, and who is, and who is to come!" And when millions of millions of ages are elapsed, their eternity is but just begun.

14. On the other hand, in what condition are those immortal spirits who have made choice of a miserable eternity? I say, made choice: for it is impossible this should be the lot of any creature, but by his own act and deed. The day is coming when every soul will be constrained to acknowledge, in the sight of men and angels,

> "No dire decree of thine did seal,
> Or fix th' unalterable doom;
> Consign my unborn soul to hell,
> Or damn me from my mother's womb."

In what condition will such a spirit be after the sentence is executed, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Suppose him to be just now plunged into "the lake of fire burning with brimstone, where they have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." Why, if we were only to be chained down one day, yea, one hour, in a lake of fire; how amazingly long would one day or one hour appear! I know not if it would not seem as a thousand years. But (astonishing thought!) after thousands of thousands, he has but just tasted of his bitter cup! After millions of millions, it will be no nearer the end than it was the moment it began!

15. What then is he, how foolish, how mad, in how unutterable a degree of distraction, who, seeming to have the understanding of a man, deliberately prefers temporal things to eternal? Who (allowing that absurd, impossible supposition, that wickedness is happiness: a supposition utterly contrary to all reason, as well as to matter of fact,) prefers the happiness of a year, say a thousand years, to the happiness of eternity? In comparison of which, a thousand ages are infinitely less than a year, a day, a moment, is to a thousand years! Especially when we take this into the consideration, (which should never be forgotten,) that refusing a happy eternity implies the choosing of a miserable eternity. For there is not, cannot be, any medium, between everlasting joy and everlasting pain. It is a vain thought which some have entertained, that death will put an end to the soul as well as the body. It will put an end to neither the one nor the other; it will only alter the manner of their existence. But when the body "returns to the dust as it was, the spirit will return to God that gave it." Therefore, at the moment of death, it must be unspeakably happy or unspeakably miserable. And this misery will *never* end.

"*Never!* Where sinks the soul at that dread sound?
Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!"

How often would he, who had made the wretched choice, wish for the death both of his soul and body? Is it not possible he might pray in some such manner as Dr. Young supposes:—

"When I have writh'd ten thousand years in fire;
Ten thousand thousand, let me then expire!"

16. Yet this unspeakable folly, this unutterable madness, of preferring present things to eternal, is the disease of every man born into the world, while in his natural state. For such is the constitution of our nature, that as the eye sees only such a portion of space at once, so the mind sees only such a portion of time at once. And as all the space that lies beyond this is invisible to the eye, so all the time which lies beyond that compass, is invisible to the mind. So that we do not perceive either the space or the time which is at a distance from us. The eye sees distinctly the space that is near it, with the objects which it contains. In like manner, the mind sees distinctly those objects which are within such a distance of time. The eye does not see the beauties of China. They are at too great a distance. There is too great a space between us and them: therefore, we are not affected by them. They are as nothing to us: it is just the same to us as if they had no being. For the same reason the mind does not see either the beauties or the terrors of eternity. We are not at all affected by them, because they are so distant from us. On this account it is that they appear to us as nothing: just as if they had no existence. Meantime we are wholly taken up with things present, whether in time or space; and things appear less and less as they are more and more distant from us, either in one respect or the other. And so it must be; such is the constitution of our nature, till nature is changed by almighty grace. But this is no manner of excuse for those who continue in their natural blindness to futurity; because a remedy for it is provided, which is found by all that seek it. Yea, it is freely given to all that sincerely ask it.

17. This remedy is faith. I do not mean, that which is the faith of a heathen, who believes that there is a God, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him; but that which is defined by the Apostle, *An evidence*, or conviction, *of things not seen:* a divine evidence and conviction of the invisible and eternal world. This alone opens the eyes of the understanding, to see God and the things of God. This, as it were, takes away, or renders transparent, the impenetrable veil,

"Which hangs 'twixt mortal and immortal Being."

When,—

"Faith lends its realizing light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly.
Th' Invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye."

Accordingly, a believer, in the scriptural sense, lives in eternity, and walks in eternity. His prospect is enlarged. His view is not any longer bounded by present things: no, nor by an earthly hemisphere, though it were, as Milton speaks, "Tenfold the length of this terrene." Faith places the unseen, the eternal world, continually before his face. Consequently, he looks not at "the things that are seen;"—

> "Wealth, honour, pleasure, or what else,
> This short enduring world can give."

These are not his aim, the object of his pursuit, his desire or happiness:—but at "the things that are not seen;" the favour, the image, and the glory of God: as well knowing, that "the things which are seen are temporal," a vapour, a shadow, a dream that vanishes away: whereas "the things that are not seen are eternal," real, solid, unchangeable.

18. What then can be a fitter employment for a wise man, than to meditate upon these things? Frequently to expand his thoughts "beyond the bounds of this diurnal sphere," and to expatiate above even the starry heavens, in the fields of eternity? What a mean might it be, to confirm his contempt of the poor, little things of earth. When a man of huge possessions was boasting to his friend of the largeness of his estate, Socrates desired him to bring him a map of the earth, and to point out Attica therein. When this was done, (although not very easily, as it was a small country,) he next desired Alcibiades to point out his own estate therein. When he could not do this, it was easy to observe how trifling the possessions were, in which he so prided himself, in comparison of the whole earth! How applicable is this to the present case. Does any one value himself on his earthly possessions? Alas, what is the whole globe of earth to the infinity of space! A mere speck of creation. And what is the life of man, yea the duration of the earth itself, but a speck of time, if it be compared to the length of eternity! Think of this: let it sink into your thought, till you have some conception, however imperfect, of that

> "Boundless, fathomless abyss,
> Without a bottom or a shore."

19. But if naked eternity, so to speak, be so vast, so astonishing an object, as even to overwhelm your thought, how does it still enlarge the idea to behold it clothed with either happiness or misery! Eternal bliss or pain! Everlasting happiness, or everlasting misery! One would think it would swallow up every other thought in every reasonable creature. Allow me only this, "Thou art on the brink of either a happy or miserable eternity:" thy Creator bids thee now stretch out thy hand, either to the one or the other: and one would imagine no rational creature could think on any thing else. One would suppose, that this single point would engross his whole atten-

tion. Certainly it ought so to do: certainly if these things are so, there can be but one thing needful. O let you and I, at least, whatever others do, choose that better part which shall never be taken away from us!

20. Before I close this subject, permit me to touch upon two remarkable passages in the Psalms, (one in the 8th, the other in the 144th,) which bear a near relation to it. The former is, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Here man is considered as a cipher, a point compared to immensity. The latter is, "Lord, what is man, that thou hast such respect unto him? Man is like a thing of naught; his time passeth away like a shadow!" In the new translation the words are stronger still: "What is man that thou takest knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?" Here the Psalmist seems to consider the life of man as a moment, a nothing, compared to eternity. Is not the purport of the former, How can He, that filleth heaven and earth, take knowledge of such an atom as man? How is it that he is not utterly lost in the immensity of God's works? Is not the purport of the latter, How can He, that inhabiteth eternity, stoop to regard the creature of a day?—One whose life passeth away like a shadow? Is not this a thought which has struck many serious minds, as well as it did David's, and created a kind of fear lest they should be forgotten before Him, who grasps all space and all eternity? But does not this fear arise from a kind of supposition, that God is such an one as ourselves? If we consider boundless space, or boundless duration, we shrink into nothing before it. But God is not a man. A day, and millions of ages are the same with Him. Hence there is the same disproportion between Him and any finite being, as between Him and the creature of a day. Therefore, whenever that thought recurs, whenever you are tempted to fear, lest you should be forgotten before the immense, the eternal God, remember that nothing is little or great, that no duration is long or short before him. Remember that God "ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis." That he presides over every individual as over the universe; and the universe, as over each individual. So that you may boldly say,

"Father, how wide thy glories shine,
Lord of the universe and mine!
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul;
Yet counts my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

SERMON LIX.

ON THE TRINITY.

Advertisement.

Some days since, I was desired to preach on this text. I did so yesterday morning. In the afternoon, I was pressed to write down and print my Sermon if possible, before I left Cork. I have written it this morning: but I must beg the reader to make allowance for the disadvantages I am under; as I have not here any books to consult, nor indeed any time to consult them.

Cork, May 8, 1775.

"*There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the* Father, *the* Word, *and the* Holy Ghost: *and these Three are One.*"—1 John v. 7.

1. WHATSOEVER the generality of people may think, it is certain that opinion is not religion: No, not right opinion, assent to one, or to ten thousand truths. There is a wide difference between them: even right opinion is as distant from religion as the East is from the West. Persons may be quite right in their opinions, and yet have no religion at all. And on the other hand, persons may be truly religious, who hold many wrong opinions. Can any one possibly doubt of this, while there are Romanists in the world? For who can deny, not only that many of them formerly have been truly religious, (as Thomas à Kempis, Gregory Lopez, and the Marquis de Renty,) but that many of them, even at this day, are real, inward Christians? And yet what a heap of erroneous opinions do they hold, delivered by tradition from their fathers! Nay, who can doubt of it while there are Calvinists in the world? Assertors of absolute predestination? For who will dare to affirm that none of these are truly religious men? Not only many of them in the last century were burning and shining lights, but many of them are now real Christians, loving God and all mankind. And yet what are all the absurd opinions of all the Romanists in the world, compared to that one, That the God of Love, the wise, just, merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh, has, from all eternity, fixed an absolute, unchangeable, irresistible decree, that part of mankind shall be saved, do what they will, and the rest damned, do what they can!

2. Hence, we cannot but infer, that there are ten thousand mistakes, which may consist with real religion; with regard to which every candid, considerate man will think and let think. But there are some truths more important than others. It seems there are some which are of deep importance. I do not term them *fundamental* truths; because that is an ambiguous word: and hence there have been so many warm disputes, about the number of *fundamentals*. But surely there are some, which it nearly concerns us to know, as having a close connexion with vital religion. And doubtless we may rank among these, that contained in the words above cited, "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One."

3. I do not mean, that it is of importance, to believe this or that *explication* of these words. I know not, that any well-judging man would attempt to explain them at all. One of the best tracts which that great man, Dean Swift, ever wrote, was his sermon upon the Trinity. Herein he shows, that all who have endeavoured to explain it at all, have utterly lost their way: have, above all other persons, hurt the cause, which they intended to promote; having only, as Job speaks, "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." It was in an evil hour, that these explainers began their fruitless work. I insist upon no explication at all; no, not even on the best I ever saw; I mean, that which is given us in the Creed commonly ascribed to Athanasius. I am far from saying, He who does not assent to this, "shall without doubt perish everlastingly." For the sake of that and another clause, I, for some time, scrupled subscribing to that creed; till I considered, 1, That these sentences only relate to *wilful*, not involuntary unbelievers: to those who, having all the means of knowing the truth, nevertheless, obstinately reject it; 2, That they relate only to the *substance* of the doctrine there delivered; not the philosophical *illustrations* of it.

4. I dare not insist upon any one's using the word *Trinity*, or *Person*. I use them myself without any scruple, because I know of none better. But if any man has any scruple concerning them, who shall constrain him to use them? I cannot; much less would I burn a man alive, and that with moist, green wood, for saying, "Though I believe the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, yet I scruple using the words *Trinity* and *Persons*, because I do not find those terms in the Bible." These are the words which merciful John Calvin cites as wrote by Servetus in a letter to himself. I would insist only on the direct words unexplained, just as they lie in the text, "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One."

5. "As they lie in the text:"—But here arises a question, Is that text genuine? Was it originally written by the Apostle, or inserted in later ages? Many have doubted of this: and in particular that great light of the Christian Church, lately removed to the Church above, Bengelius, the most pious, the most judicious, and the most laborious, of

all the modern Commentators on the New Testament. For some time he stood in doubt of its authenticity, because it is wanting in many of the ancient copies. But his doubts were removed by three considerations: 1, That though it is wanting in many copies, yet it is found in more, and those, copies of the greatest authority: 2, That it is cited by a whole train of ancient writers, from the time of St. John to that of Constantine. This argument is conclusive: for they could not have cited it, had it not then been in the Sacred Canon: 3, That we can easily account for its being after that time wanting in many copies, when we remember that Constantine's successor was a zealous Arian, who used every means to promote his bad cause, to spread Arianism throughout the empire: in particular, the erasing this text out of as many copies as fell into his hands. And he so far prevailed, that the age in which he lived, is commonly styled, *Seculum Arianum*, the Arian Age: there being then only one eminent man, who opposed him at the peril of his life. So that it was a proverb, "*Athanasius contra mundum;*" Athanasius against the world.

6. But it is objected, "Whatever becomes of the text, we cannot believe what we cannot comprehend. When, therefore, you require us to believe mysteries, we pray you to have us excused."

Here is a twofold mistake. 1, We do not require you to believe any mystery in this; whereas, you suppose the contrary. But, 2, You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend.

7. To begin with the latter. You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a *Sun* over your head. But, whether he stand still in the midst of his system, or not only revolves on his own axis, but "rejoiceth as a giant to run his course;" you cannot comprehend either one or the other. *How* he moves, or *how* he rests: by what power, what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid ether? You cannot deny the fact; yet you cannot account for it, so as to satisfy any rational inquirer. You may, indeed, give us the hypothesis of Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am sick of them, I care not three straws for them all.

> "Each new solution but once more affords
> New change of terms, and scaffolding of words:
> In other garb my question I receive,
> And take my doubt the very same I gave."

Still I insist, the *fact* you believe: you cannot deny. But the *manner* you cannot comprehend.

8. You believe there is such a thing as *Light*, whether flowing from the sun, or any other luminous body. But you cannot comprehend either its nature, or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the Earth in eight minutes, two hundred thousand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the candle brought into the room, instantly disperse into every corner? Again. Here are three candles, yet there is but one light. Explain this, and I will explain the Three-One God.

9. You believe there is such a thing as Air. It both covers you as a garment, and

> ——————"Wide interfus'd,
> Embraces round this florid earth."

But can you comprehend how? Can you give me a satisfactory account of its nature, or the cause of its properties? Think only of one, its elasticity: Can you account for this? It may be owing to electric fire attached to each particle of it: It may not: and neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it, till we can comprehend it, our life is very near its period.

10. You believe there is such a thing as *Earth*. Here, you fix your foot upon it. You are supported by it. But do you comprehend what it is that supports the earth? "O, an Elephant," says a Malabarian Philosopher: "and a bull supports him." But what supports the bull? The Indian and the Briton are equally at a loss for an answer. We know it is God that "spreadeth the north over the empty space, and hangeth the earth upon nothing." This is the fact. But how? Who can account for this? Perhaps angelic, but not human creatures.

I know what is plausibly said concerning the powers of projection and attraction. But spin as fine as we can, matter of fact sweeps away our cobweb hypothesis. Connect the force of projection and attraction how you can, they will never produce a circular motion. The moment the projected steel comes within the attraction of the magnet, it does not form a curve, but drops down.

11. You believe you have a *Soul*. "Hold there," says the Doctor:* "I believe no such thing. If *you* have an immaterial soul, so have the brutes too." I will not quarrel with any that think they have; nay, I wish he could prove it. And surely I would rather allow *them* souls, than I would give up my own. In this I cordially concur in the sentiment of the honest heathen, *Si erro, libenter erro: et me redargui valde recusem.* If I err, I err willingly: and I vehemently refuse to be convinced of it. And I trust most of those who do not believe a Trinity, are of the same mind. Permit me then to go on. You believe you have a soul connected with this house of clay. But can you comprehend how? What are the ties that unite the heavenly flame with the earthly clod? You understand just nothing of the matter. So it is: but how, none can tell.

12. You surely believe you have a *Body*, together with your soul, and that each are dependent on the other. Run only a thorn into your hand: immediately pain is felt in your soul. On the other side, is shame felt in your soul? Instantly a blush overspreads your cheek. Does the soul feel fear or violent anger? Presently the body trembles. These also are facts which you cannot deny: nor can you account for them.

13. I bring but one instance more. At the command of your

* Dr. Bl—r, in his late Tract.

soul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connexion between the acts of the mind and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for *muscular motion* at all, in any instance of it whatever? When one of the most ingenious Physicians in England had finished his lectures upon that head, he added, "Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the discoveries of our enlightened age. And now, if you understand one jot of the matter, you understand more than I do."

The short of the matter is this. Those who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, must not believe that there is a *sun* in the firmament, that there is *light* shining around them, that there is *air*, though it encompasses them on every side, that there is any *earth*, though they stand upon it. They must not believe that they have a *soul*, no, nor that they have a *body*.

14. But, Secondly, as strange as it may seem, in requiring you to believe, "That there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One:" you are not required to believe any mystery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. Peter Browne, some time Bishop of Cork, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any mystery at all. The Bible barely requires you to believe such *facts*, not the manner of them. Now the mystery does not lie in the *fact*, but altogether in the *manner*.

For instance: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." I believe it: I believe the plain *fact:* there is no mystery at all in this. The mystery lies in the *manner* of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me.

Again. "The Word was made flesh." I believe this fact also. There is no mystery in it; but as to the *manner*, *how* he was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it, I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my understanding.

15. To apply this to the case before us. "There are Three that bear record in Heaven—and these Three are One." I believe this *fact* also, (if I may use the expression,) that God is Three and One. But the *manner*, *how*, I do not comprehend: and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the *manner*, lies the mystery: and so it may; I have no concern with it. It is no object of my faith; I believe just so much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the *manner* he has not revealed: therefore, I believe nothing about it. But would it not be absurd in me, to deny the fact, because I do not understand the manner? That is, to reject *what God has revealed*, because I do not comprehend *what he has not revealed*.

16. This is a point much to be observed. There are many things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Part of these God hath "revealed to us by his Spirit:" *revealed*, that is, unveiled, uncovered: that part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed; that we need not, and indeed, cannot believe: it is far above, out of our sight.

Now, where is the wisdom of rejecting what is revealed, because we do not understand what is not revealed? Of denying the *fact*, which God has unveiled, because we cannot see the *manner*, which is veiled still?

17. Especially when we consider that what God has been pleased to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference; is a truth of the last importance. It enters into the very heart of Christianity; it lies at the root of all vital religion.

Unless these Three are One, how can "all men honour the Son even as they honour the Father?" "I know not what to do," says Socinus in a letter to his friend, "with my untoward followers. They will not worship Jesus Christ. I tell them, it is written 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' They answer, However that be, if he is not God, we dare not worship him. For 'it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'"

But the thing which I here particularly mean, is this: The knowledge of the Three-One God, is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion.

I do not say, that every real Christian can declare with the Marquis de Renty, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of *babes*, but rather of *fathers in Christ*.

But I know not how any one can be a Christian believer, till he "hath (as St. John speaks) the witness in himself: till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God:" that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him, through the merits of God the Son: and having this witness, he honours the Son and the blessed Spirit, "even as he honours the Father."

18. Not that every Christian believer *adverts* to this; perhaps, at first, not one in twenty; but if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore, I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion, who denies that these Three are One. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved, during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance,) but that God, before they go hence, will "bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

SERMON LX.

GOD'S APPROBATION OF HIS WORKS.

"*And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.*"—GENESIS i. 31.

1. WHEN God created the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, at the conclusion of each day's work, it is said, "And God saw that it was good." Whatever was created was good in its kind; suited to the end for which it was designed; adapted to promote the good of the whole, and the glory of the great Creator. This sentence it pleased God to pass with regard to each particular creature. But there is a remarkable variation of the expression, with regard to all the parts of the universe, taken in connexion with each other, and constituting one system. "And God saw every thing that he had made: and, behold, it was very good."

2. How small a part of this great work of God is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what he has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able. For "the merciful Lord," as the Psalmist observes, "hath so done his marvellous works," of Creation, as well as of Providence, "that they ought to be had in remembrance" by all that fear him, which they cannot well be, unless they are understood. Let us, then, by the assistance of that Spirit, who giveth unto man understanding, endeavour to take a general survey of the works which God made in this lower world, as they were before they were disordered and depraved, in consequence of the sin of man: we shall then easily see, that as every creature was *good* in its primeval state, so when all were compacted in one general system, "behold! they were very good." I do not remember to have seen any attempt of this kind, unless in that truly excellent poem, (termed by Mr. Hutchinson, *That wicked farce!*) Milton's Paradise Lost.

I. 1. "In the beginning God created the matter of the heavens and the earth." (So the words, as a great man observes, may properly be translated.) He first created the four elements, out of which the whole Universe was composed; earth, water, air, and fire, all mingled together in one common mass. The grossest parts of this, the earth and water, were utterly without form, till God infused a principle of motion, commanding the air to move "upon the face of the waters." In the next place, "the Lord God said, Let there be

light: and there was light." Here were the four constituent parts of the universe: the true, original, simple elements. They were all essentially distinct from each other: and yet so intimately mixed together in all compound bodies, that we cannot find any, be it ever so minute, which does not contain them all.

2. *And God saw that* every one of these *was good*, was perfect in its kind. The *earth* was good. The whole surface of it was beautiful in a high degree. To make it more agreeable,

> ——— "He cloth'd
> The universal face with pleasant green."

He adorned it with flowers of every hue, and with shrubs and trees of every kind. And every part was fertile as well as beautiful: it was no way deformed by rough or ragged rocks: it did not shock the view with horrid precipices, huge chasms, or dreary caverns: with deep, impassable morasses, or deserts of burning sands. But we have not any authority to say, with some learned and ingenious authors, that there were no mountains on the original earth, no unevennesses, on its surface. It is not easy to reconcile this hypothesis, with those words of Moses, "The waters increased—and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward [above the highest] did the waters prevail: and the mountains were covered," Gen. vii. 19. 23. We have no reason to believe that these mountains were produced by the deluge itself. Not the least intimation of this is given: therefore we cannot doubt but they existed before it: indeed they answered many excellent purposes, beside greatly increasing the beauty of the creation, by a variety of prospects, which had been totally lost had the earth been one extended plain. Yet we need not suppose their sides were abrupt, or difficult of ascent. It is highly probable that they rose and fell, by almost insensible degrees.

3. As to the internal parts of the earth, even to this day, we scarcely have any knowledge of them. Many have supposed the centre of the globe to be surrounded by an abyss of fire. Many others have imagined it to be encompassed with an abyss of water; which they supposed to be termed in Scripture, "the great deep," Gen. vii. 11: all the fountains of which were broken up, in order to the general deluge. But, however this was, we are sure all things were disposed therein, with the most perfect order and harmony. Hence there were no agitations within the bowels of the globe: no violent convulsions: no concussions of the earth: no earthquakes: but all was unmoved as the pillars of heaven. There were then no such things as eruptions of fire: there were no volcanoes, or burning mountains. Neither Vesuvius, Ætna, nor Hecla, if they had any being, then poured out smoke and flame, but were covered with a verdant mantle, from the top to the bottom.

4. The Element of *Water*, it is probable, was then mostly confined within the great abyss. In the new earth (as we are informed by

the Apostle, Rev. xxi. 1, "There will be no more sea;" none covering as now the face of the earth, and rendering so large a part of it uninhabitable by man. Hence, it is probable there was no external sea in the paradisiacal earth: none, until the great deep burst the barriers which were originally appointed for it; indeed, there was not then that need of the ocean for navigation which there is now. For either, as the poet supposes,

Omnis tulit omnia tellus;

every country produced whatever was requisite either for the necessity or comfort of its inhabitants: or man, being then (as he will be again at the resurrection) equal to angels, was able to convey himself, at his pleasure, to any given distance. Over and above that, those flaming messengers were always ready to minister to the heirs of salvation. But whether there was sea or not, there were rivers sufficient to water the earth, and make it very plenteous. These answered all the purposes of convenience and pleasure:

By "liquid lapse of murmuring stream;"

to which were added gentle, genial showers, with salutary mists and exhalations. But there were no putrid lakes, no turbid or stagnating waters: but only

——————Such as "bore imprest
Fair nature's image on their placid breast."

5. The element of *Air* was then always serene, and always friendly to man. It contained no frightful meteors, no unwholesome vapours, no poisonous exhalations. There were no tempests, but only cool and gentle breezes,

Genitabilis aura Favoni,

fanning both man and beast, and wafting the fragrant odours on their silent wings.

6. The Sun, the fountain of *fire*,

"Of this great world both eye and soul,"

was situated at the most exact distance from the earth, so as to yield a sufficient quantity of heat, (neither too little nor too much,) to every part of it. God had not yet

"Bid his angels turn askance
This oblique globe."

There was, therefore, then no country that groaned under

"The rage of Arctos, and eternal frost."

There was no violent winter, or sultry summer; no extreme, either of heat or cold. No soil was burnt up by the solar heat: none uninhabitable through the want of it. Thus earth, water, air, and fire, all conspired together to the welfare and pleasure of man.

7. To the same purpose served the grateful vicissitude of light and darkness, day and night. For as the human body, though not liable to death or pain, yet needed continual sustenance by food, so, although it was not liable to weariness, yet it needed continual reparation by sleep. By this the springs of the animal machine were wound up from time to time, and kept always fit for the pleasing labour for which man was designed by his Creator. Accordingly "the evening and the morning were the first day," before sin or pain was in the world. The first natural day had one part dark, for a season of repose; one part light for a season of labour. And even in paradise "Adam slept," chap. ii. 21, before he sinned; sleep, therefore, belonged to innocent, human nature. Yet I do not apprehend, it can be inferred from hence, that there is either darkness or sleep in heaven. Surely there is no darkness in that city of God. Is it not expressly said, Rev. xxii. 5, "There shall be no night there?" Indeed they have no light from the sun; but "the Lord giveth them light." So it is all day in heaven, as it is all night in hell. On earth we have a mixture of both. Day and night succeed each other, till earth shall be turned to heaven. Neither can we at all credit the account given by the ancient poet, concerning sleep in heaven; although he allows *cloud-compelling Jove* to remain awake while the inferior gods were sleeping. It is pity, therefore, that our great poet should copy so servilely after the old heathen, as to tell us

> ——————"Sleep had seal'd
> All but th' unsleeping eyes of God himself."

Not so: they that are "before the throne of God, serve him day and night," speaking after the manner of men, "in his temple," Rev. vii. 15. That is, without any interval. As wicked spirits are tormented day and night, without any intermission of their misery: so holy spirits enjoy God day and night, without any intermission of their happiness.

8. On the second day God encompassed the terraqueous globe with that noble appendage, the atmosphere, consisting chiefly of air, but replete with earthly particles of various kinds, and with huge volumes of water, sometimes invisible, sometimes visible, buoyed up by that ethereal fire, a particle of which cleaves to every particle of air. By this the water was divided into innumerable drops, which, descending, watered the earth and made it very plenteous, without incommoding any of its inhabitants. For there were then no impetuous currents of air, no tempestuous winds; no furious hail, no torrents of rain, no rolling thunders or forky lightnings. One pe-

rennial spring was perpetually smiling over the whole surface of the earth.

9. On the third day God commanded all kind of vegetables to spring out of the earth. And then added thereto innumerable herbs, intermixed with flowers of all hues. To these were added shrubs of every kind, together with tall and stately trees, whether for shade, for timber, or for fruit, in endless variety. Some of these were adapted to particular climates or particular exposures: while vegetables of more general use, (as wheat in particular,) were not confined to one country, but would flourish almost in every climate. But among all these there were no weeds, no useless plants, none that encumbered the ground. Much less were there any poisonous ones, tending to hurt any one creature: but every thing was salutary in its kind, suitable to the gracious design of its great Creator.

10. The Lord now created "the sun to rule the day, and the moon to govern the night." The sun was

"Of this great world both eye and soul:"—

The eye, making all things visible; distributing light to every part of the system, and thereby rejoicing both earth and sky: and the soul, the principle of all life, whether to vegetables or animals. Some of the uses of the moon we are acquainted with; her causing the ebbing and flowing of the sea, and influencing in a greater or smaller degree, all the fluids of the terraqueous globe. And many other uses she may have, unknown to us, but known to the wise Creator. But it is certain she had no hurtful, no unwholesome influence on any living creature. "He made the stars also: both those that move round the sun, whether of the primary or secondary order: or those that, being at a far greater distance, appear to us fixed in the firmament of heaven. Whether *comets* are to be numbered among the stars, and whether they were parts of the original creation, is, perhaps, not so easy to determine, at least with certainty: as we have nothing but probable conjecture, either concerning their nature or their use. We know not whether (as some ingenious men have imagined,) they are ruined worlds; worlds that have undergone a general conflagration: or whether (as others not improbably suppose) they are immense reservoirs of fluids, appointed to revolve at certain seasons, and to supply the still decreasing moisture of the earth. But certain we are, that they did not either produce or portend any evil. They did not (as many have fancied since)

"——From their horrid hair
Shake pestilence and war."

11. The Lord God afterward peopled the earth with animals of every kind. He first commanded the waters to bring forth abundantly; to bring forth creatures, which, as they inhabited a grosser

element, so they were, in general, of a more stupid nature, endowed with fewer senses and less understanding than other animals. The bivalved shell-fish, in particular, seem to have no sense but that of feeling, unless, perhaps, a low measure of taste: so that they are but one degree above vegetables. And even the king of the waters (a title which some give the whale, because of his enormous magnitude) though he has sight added to taste and feeling, does not appear to have an understanding proportioned to his bulk. Rather he is inferior therein, not only to most birds and beasts, but to the generality of even reptiles and insects. However, none of these then attempted to devour, or in any wise hurt one another. All were peaceful and quiet, as were the watery fields wherein they ranged at pleasure.

12. It seems the insect kinds were at least one degree above the inhabitants of the waters. Almost all these too devour one another, and every other creature which they can conquer. Indeed, such is the miserably disordered state of the world at present, that innumerable creatures can no otherwise preserve their own lives, than by destroying others. But in the beginning it was not so. The paradisiacal earth afforded a sufficiency of food for all its inhabitants: so that none of them had any need or temptation to prey upon the other. The spider was then as harmless as the fly, and did not then lie in wait for blood. The weakest of them crept securely over the earth, or spread their gilded wings in the air, that wavered in the breeze and glittered in the sun, without any to make them afraid. Meantime, the reptiles of every kind were equally harmless, and more intelligent than they: yea, one species of them *was more subtle*, or knowing, *than any of the* brute creation *which God had made.*

13. But, in general, the *birds*, created to fly in the open firmament of heaven, appear to have been of an order far superior to either insects or reptiles; although still considerably inferior to *beasts:* (as we now restrain that word to quadrupeds, four-footed animals, which, two hundred years ago, included every kind of living creatures.) Many species of these are not only endowed with a large measure of natural understanding, but are likewise capable of much improvement by art, such as one would not readily conceive. But among all these there were no birds or beasts of prey: none that destroyed or molested another: but all the creatures breathed, in their several kinds, the benevolence of their great Creator.

14. Such was the state of the creation, according to the scanty ideas which we can now form concerning it, when its great Author, surveying the whole system at one view, pronounced it *very good!* It was good in the highest degree whereof it was capable, and without any mixture of evil. Every part was exactly suited to the others, and conducive to the good of the whole. There was "*a golden chain*" (to use the expression of Plato) "let down from the throne of God," an exactly connected series of beings, from the highest to the lowest: from dead earth, through fossils, vegetables, animals, to

man, created in the image of God, and designed to know, to love, and to enjoy his Creator to all eternity.

II. 1. Here is a firm foundation laid on which we may stand, and answer all the cavils of minute philosophers; all the objections which *vain men*, who *would be wise*, make to the goodness or wisdom of God in the creation. All these are grounded upon an entire mistake, namely, That the world is now in the same state it was at the beginning. And upon this supposition they plausibly build abundance of objections. But all these objections fall to the ground, when we observe this supposition cannot be admitted. The world at the beginning was in a totally different state, from that wherein we find it now. Object, therefore, whatever you please to the present state, either of the animate or inanimate creation, whether in general, or with regard to any particular instances; and the answer is ready. These are not now as they were in the beginning. Had you, therefore, heard that vain King of Castile, crying out with exquisite self-sufficiency, "If I had made the world, I would have made it better than God Almighty has made it;" you might have replied, "No: God Almighty, whether you know it or not, did not make it as it is now. He himself made it better, unspeakably better than it is at present. He made it without blemish, yea, without any defect. He made no corruption, no destruction in the inanimate creation. He made no death in the animal creation, neither its harbingers, sin and pain. If you will not believe his own account, believe your brother heathen. It was only

Post ignem æthereâ domo
Subductum,—

that is, in plain English,—After man, in utter defiance of his Maker, had eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, that

Macies et nova febrium
Terris incubuit cohors:

that a whole army of evils, totally new, totally unknown till then, broke in upon rebel man, and all other creatures, and overspread the face of the earth.

2. "Nay," (says a bold man,* who has since personated a Christian, and so well, that many think him one!) "God is not to blame for either the natural or moral evils that are in the world. For he made it as well as he could: seeing evil must exist in the very nature of things." It must, *in the present nature* of things, supposing man to have rebelled against God. But evil did not exist at all in the original nature of things. It was no more the original result of matter, than it was the necessary result of spirit. All things, then, without exception, were very good. And how should they be otherwise? There was no defect at all in the power of God, any more

* Mr. S— J—s

than in his goodness or wisdom. His goodness inclined him to make all things good: and this was executed by his power and wisdom. Let every sensible infidel, then, be ashamed of making such miserable *excuses* for his Creator! He needs none of us to make *apologies*, either for him, or for his creation. *As for God, his way is perfect;* and such originally were all his works. And such they will be again, when *the Son of God* shall have *destroyed all the works of the devil.*

3. Upon this ground, then, that "*God made man upright*," and every creature perfect in its kind, but that man "*found out to himself many inventions*" of happiness independent on God: and that by his apostacy from God, he threw not only himself, but likewise the whole creation, which was intimately connected with him, into disorder, misery, death: upon this ground, I say, we do not find it difficult to

"Justify the ways of God with men."

For although he left man in the hand of his own counsel, to choose good or evil, life or death; although he did not take away the liberty he had given him, but suffered him to choose death, in consequence of which the whole creation now groaneth together: yet, when we consider that all the evils introduced into the creation may work together for our good: yea, may "work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" we may well praise God for permitting these temporary evils, in order to our eternal good: yea, we may well cry out, "O the depth both of the wisdom and the goodness of God!" "He hath done all things well." "Glory be unto God, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

SERMON LXI.

ON THE FALL OF MAN.

"*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*"—GEN. iii. 19.

1. WHY is there *pain* in the world? Seeing God is "loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works?" Because there is *sin:* had there been no sin, there would have been no pain. But pain, (supposing God to be just,) is the necessary effect of sin. But why is there sin in the world? Because man was created in the image of God;—because he is not mere matter,—a clod of earth,—a lump of clay, without sense or understanding, but a spirit like his Creator; a being endued, not only with sense and understanding,

but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty, a power of directing his own affections and actions, a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good or evil. Indeed had not man been endued with this, all the rest would have been of no use. Had he not been a free, as well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter: he chose evil. Thus "sin entered into the world," and pain of every kind, preparatory to *death*.

2. But this plain, simple account of the origin of evil, whether natural or moral, all the wisdom of man could not discover, till it pleased God to reveal it to the world. Till then, man was a mere enigma to himself, a riddle which none but God could solve. And in how full and satisfactory a manner, has he solved it in this chapter. In such a manner, as does not, indeed, serve to gratify vain curiosity, but as is abundantly sufficient to answer a nobler end; to

"Justify the ways of God with men."

To this great end, I would, First, briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter: and then, Secondly, more particularly weigh the solemn words, which have been already recited.

I. 1. In the first place, let us briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter. "Now the serpent was more subtle," or intelligent, "than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made," ver. 1. Endued with more understanding than any other animal in the brute creation. Indeed there is no improbability in the conjecture of an ingenious man,* that the serpent was endued with reason, which is now the property of man. And this accounts for a circumstance, which, on any other supposition, would be utterly unintelligible. How comes Eve not to be surprised, yea, startled and affrighted, at hearing the serpent *speak* and *reason;* unless she knew that reason, and speech in consequence of it, were the original properties of the serpent? Hence, without showing any surprise, she immediately enters into conversation with him. "And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" See how he, who was a liar from the beginning, mixes truth and falsehood together! Perhaps on purpose, that she might be the more inclined to speak, in order to clear God of the unjust charge. Accordingly, the woman *said unto the serpent*, ver. 2, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it; neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Thus far she appears to have been clear of blame. But how long did she continue so? "And the serpent said unto the woman, Surely ye shall not die. For God doth know, in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as

* The late Dr. Nicholas Robinson.

gods, knowing good and evil," ver. 4, 5. Here sin began, namely, unbelief. "The woman was deceived," says the Apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil, than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual sin. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat," and so completed her sin. But *the man*, as the Apostle observes, *was not deceived*. How then came he to join in the transgression? "She gave unto her husband, and he did eat." He sinned with his eyes open. He rebelled against his Creator, as is highly probable,

> ——"Not by stronger reason moved,
> But fondly overcome with female charms."

And if this was the case, there is no absurdity in the assertion of a great man, "That Adam sinned in his heart, before he sinned outwardly, before he ate of the forbidden fruit," namely, by inward idolatry, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

2. Immediately pain followed sin. When he lost his innocence, he lost his happiness. He painfully feared that God, in the love of whom his supreme happiness before consisted "He said," ver. 10, "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." He fled from him, who was, till then, his desire, and glory, and joy. He "hid himself from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the garden!" Hid himself! What, from the All-seeing Eye? The Eye which, with one glance, pervades heaven and earth? See how his understanding likewise was impaired! What amazing folly was this! Such as one would imagine very few, even of his posterity, could have fallen into. So dreadfully was his *foolish heart darkened* by sin, and guilt, and sorrow, and fear! His innocence was lost; and at the same time, his happiness and his wisdom! Here is the clear, intelligible answer to that question, *How came evil into the world?*

3. One cannot but observe, throughout this whole narration, the inexpressible tenderness, and lenity of the Almighty Creator, from whom they had revolted; the sovereign against whom they had rebelled. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?" Thus graciously calling him to return, who would otherwise have eternally fled from God. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked." Still here is no acknowledgment of his fault, no humiliation for it. But with what astonishing tenderness does God lead him to make that acknowledgment? "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? How camest thou to make this discovery? "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?" "And the man said," (still unhumbled, yea, indirectly throwing the blame upon God himself,) "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." "And the Lord God," (still in order to bring them to repentance,) "said

unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?" ver. 13. "And the woman said," (nakedly declaring the thing as it was,) "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, (to testify his utter abhorrence of sin, by a lasting monument of his displeasure, in punishing the creature that had been barely the instrument of it,) "Thou art cursed above the cattle, and above every beast of the field.—And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus, in the midst of judgment, hath God remembered mercy, from the beginning of the world! Connecting the grand promise of salvation, with the very sentence of condemnation.

4. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and (or, in) thy conception; in sorrow (or pain,) thou shalt bring forth children," yea, above any other creature under heaven: which original curse, we see, is entailed on her latest posterity. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." It seems, the latter part of this sentence, is explanatory of the former. Was there, till now, any other inferiority of the woman to the man, than that which we may conceive of one angel to another? "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake.—Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee:" useless, yea, and hurtful productions: whereas nothing calculated to hurt, or give pain, had, at first, any place in the creation. "And thou shalt eat of the herb of the field:" (coarse and vile, compared to the delicious fruits of Paradise.) "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it thou wast taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."

II. 1. Let us now, in the Second place, weigh these solemn words, in a more particular manner. "Dust thou art." But how fearfully and wonderfully wrought, into innumerable fibres, nerves, membranes, muscles, arteries, veins, vessels of various kinds! And how amazingly is this dust connected with water, with enclosed, circulating fluids, diversified a thousand ways, by a thousand tubes and strainers! Yea, and how wonderfully is air impacted into every part, solid, or fluid, of the animal machine; *air* not elastic, which would tear the machine in pieces, but as fixed as water under the Pole! But all this would not avail, were not ethereal *fire* intimately mixed both with this earth, air, and water. And all these elements are mingled together in the most exact proportion: so that while the body is in health, no one of them predominates, in the least degree, over the others.

2. Such was man, with regard to his corporeal part, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. But since he sinned, he is not only dust, but mortal, corruptible dust. And, by sad experience, we find, that this *corruptible body, presses down the soul.* It very frequently hinders the soul in its operations, and, at best, serves it very imperfectly. Yet the soul cannot dispense with its service, imperfect as it

is. For an embodied spirit cannot form one thought, but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking is not, as many suppose, the act of a pure spirit: but the act of a spirit connected with a body, and playing upon a set of material keys. It cannot possibly, therefore, make any better music, than the nature and state of its instruments allow it. Hence every disorder of the body, especially of the parts more immediately subservient to thinking, lay an almost insuperable bar in the way of its thinking justly. Hence the maxim received in all ages, *Humanum est errare et nescire.* Not ignorance alone, (that belongs, more or less, to every *creature* in heaven and earth: seeing none is omniscient, none knoweth all things, save the *Creator*,) but error is entailed on every child of man. Mistake as well as ignorance, is, in our present state, inseparable from humanity. Every child of man is in a thousand mistakes, and is liable to fresh mistakes every moment. And a mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practice, yea, naturally leads thereto. I mistake, and possibly cannot avoid mistaking, the character of this or that man. I suppose him to be what he is not: to be better or worse than he really is. Upon this wrong supposition I behave wrong to him, that is, more or less affectionately than he deserves. And by the mistake which is occasioned by the defect of my bodily organs, I am naturally led so to do. Such is the present condition of human nature: of a mind dependent on a mortal body. Such is the state entailed on all human spirits, while connected with flesh and blood!

3. "And unto dust thou shalt return." How admirably well has the wise Creator secured the execution of this sentence on all the offspring of Adam! It is true, He was pleased to make one exception, from this general rule, in a very early age of the world, in favour of an eminently righteous man. So we read, Gen. v. 23, 24. After Enoch had "walked with God, three hundred sixty and five years, he was not: for God took him." He exempted him from the sentence passed upon all flesh, and took him alive into heaven. Many ages after, he was pleased to make a second exception; ordering the Prophet Elijah to be taken up into heaven, in a chariot of fire: very probably by a convoy of angels, assuming that appearance. And it is not unlikely, that he saw good to make a third exception, in the person of the beloved Disciple. There is transmitted to us, a particular account of the Apostle John's old age; but we have not any account of his death, and not the least intimation concerning it. Hence we may reasonably suppose that he did not die, but that after he had finished his course, and "walked with God" for about a hundred years, *the Lord took him*, as he did Enoch: not in so open a manner, as he did the Prophet Elijah.

4. But setting these rare instances aside, who has been able, in the course of near six thousand years, to evade the execution of this sentence, passed on Adam and all his posterity? Be men ever so great masters of the art of healing, can they prevent or heal the gradual decays of nature? Can all their boasted skill heal old age,

or hinder dust from returning to dust? Nay, who among the greatest masters of medicine, has been able to add a century to his own years? Yea, or to protract his own life any considerable space beyond the common period? The days of man, for above three thousand years, (from the time of Moses at least,) have been fixed, by a middling computation, at threescore years and ten. How few are there that attain to fourscore years? Perhaps hardly one in five hundred. So little does the art of man avail against the appointment of God.

5. God has indeed provided for the execution of his own decree, in the very principles of our nature. It is well known, the human body, when it comes into the world, consists of innumerable membranes exquisitely thin, that are filled with circulating fluids, to which the solid parts bear a very small proportion. Into the tubes, composed of these membranes, nourishment must be continually infused: otherwise, life cannot continue, but will come to an end almost as soon as it is begun. And suppose this nourishment to be liquid, which, as it flows through those fine canals, continually enlarges them in all their dimensions, yet it contains innumerable solid particles, which continually adhere to the inner surface of the vessels through which they flow: so that in the same proportion as any vessel is enlarged, it is stiffened also. Thus the body grows firmer, as it grows larger from infancy to manhood. In twenty, five and twenty, or thirty years, it attains its full measure of firmness. Every part of the body is then stiffened to its full degree: as much earth adhering to all the vessels, as gives the solidity they severally need to the nerves, arteries, veins, muscles, in order to exercise their functions in the most perfect manner. For twenty, or it may be, thirty years following, although more and more particles of earth continually adhere to the inner surface of every vessel in the body, yet the stiffness, caused thereby, is hardly observable, and occasions little inconvenience. But after sixty years, (more or less, according to the natural constitution, and a thousand accidental circumstances,) the change is easily perceived, even at the surface of the body. Wrinkles show the proportion of the fluids to be lessened, as does also the dryness of the skin, through a diminution of the blood and juices which before moistened, and kept it smooth and soft. The extremities of the body grow cold, not only as they are remote from the centre of motion, but the smaller vessels are filled up, and can no longer admit the circulating fluid. As age increases, fewer and fewer of the vessels are pervious, and capable of transmitting the vital stream; except the larger ones, most of which are lodged within the trunk of the body. In extreme old age, the arteries themselves, the grand instruments of circulation, by the continual apposition of earth, become hard, and, as it were, bony, till having lost the power of contracting themselves, they can no longer propel the blood, even through the largest channels, in consequence of which, death naturally ensues. Thus are the seeds of death sown in our very nature! Thus from the very hour when we first appear on the stage of life, we are

travelling toward death: we are preparing, whether we will or not, to return to the dust whence we came!

6. Let us now take a short review of the whole, as it is delivered with inimitable simplicity; what an unprejudiced person might even from hence infer to be the word of God. In that period of duration which he saw to be most proper, (of which he alone could be the judge, whose eye views the whole possibility of things from everlasting to everlasting,) the Almighty, rising in the greatness of his strength, went forth to create the universe. *In the beginning he created*, made out of nothing, *the matter of the heavens and the earth.* (So Mr. Hutchinson observes, the original words properly signify.) Then *the Spirit, or breath, from the Lord*, that is, the air, *moved upon the face of the waters.* Here were earth, water, air; three of the elements, or component parts of the lower world. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." By his omnific word, light, that is, fire, the fourth element, sprang into being. Out of these, variously modified and proportioned, he composed the whole. "The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit after its kind:" and then the various tribes of animals, to inhabit the waters, the air, and the earth. But the very heathen could observe,

Sanctius his animal mentisq; capacius altæ
Deerat adhuc!————

There was still wanting a creature of a higher rank, capable of wisdom and holiness. *Natus homo est.* "So God created man in the image of God, in the image of God created he him!" Mark the emphatical repetition. God did not make him mere matter, a piece of senseless, unintelligent clay; but a spirit, like himself, although clothed with a material vehicle. As such, he was endued with understanding, with a will, including various affections, and with liberty, a power of using them in a right or wrong manner, of choosing good or evil. Otherwise, neither his understanding nor his will would have been to any purpose; for he must have been as incapable of virtue or holiness, as the stock of a tree. Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. He chose to do his own will rather than the will of his Creator. He *was not deceived*, but knowingly and deliberately rebelled against his Father and his King. In that moment he lost the moral image of God, and in part, the natural. He commenced unholy, foolish, and unhappy. And "in Adam all died." He entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, fear, pain, diseases, and death.

7. How exactly does matter of fact, do all things round us, even the face of the whole world, agree with this account? Open your eyes! Look round you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see consciousness of guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery, the daughter of sin. See, on every side, sickness and

pain, inhabitants of every nation under heaven, driving on the poor, helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death! So they have done, well nigh from the beginning of the world. So they will do, till the consummation of all things.

8. But can the Creator despise the work of his own hands? Surely that is impossible! Hath he not then, seeing he alone is able, provided a remedy for all these evils? Yea, verily he hath! And a sufficient remedy, every way adequate to the disease. He hath fulfilled his word: he hath given "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head."—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is a remedy provided for all our guilt: he "bore all our sins in his body on the tree." And "if any one have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And here is a remedy for all our disease, all the corruption of our nature. For *God hath also*, through the intercession of his Son, *given us his Holy Spirit*, to *renew* us both *in knowledge*, in his natural image, *opening the eyes of our understanding, and enlightening* us with all such knowledge as is requisite to our pleasing God: and also in his moral image, namely, "righteousness and true holiness." And supposing this is done, we know that "all things will work together for our good." We know, by happy experience, that all natural evils change their nature and turn to good: that sorrow, sickness, pain, will all prove medicines, to heal our spiritual sickness. They will all be *to our profit;* will all tend to our unspeakable advantage: making us more largely "partakers of his holiness," while we remain on earth, adding so many stars to that crown, which is reserved in heaven for us.

9. Behold then both the justice and mercy of God! His justice in punishing sin, the sin of him in whose loins we were then all contained, on Adam and his whole posterity! And his mercy, in providing an universal remedy for an universal evil! In appointing the Second Adam to die for all, who had died in the first: "that as in Adam all died, so in Christ all might be made alive:" that "as by one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one," the free gift "might come upon all, unto justification of life:" "Justification of life," as being connected with the New Birth, the beginning of spiritual life, which leads us through the life of holiness, to life eternal, to glory.

10. And it should be particularly observed, that "where sin abounded, grace does much more abound." For, "not as the condemnation, so is the free gift," but we may gain infinitely more than we have lost. We may now attain both higher degrees of holiness and higher degrees of glory, than it would otherwise have been possible for us to attain. If Adam had not sinned, the Son of God had not died. Consequently that amazing instance of the love of God to man had never existed, which has, in all ages, excited the highest joy, and love, and gratitude from his children. We might have loved God the Creator;—God the Preserver;—God the Governor. But

there would have been no place for love to God the Redeemer: this could have had no being. The highest glory and joy, of saints on earth and saints in heaven, Christ crucified, had been wanting. We could not then have praised Him, that, "thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross!" This is now the noblest theme of all the children of God on earth. Yea, we need not scruple to affirm, even of angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

"Hallelujah, they cry,
To the King of the sky,
To the great everlasting I AM;
To the Lamb that was slain,
And liveth again,
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!"

SERMON LXII.

ON PREDESTINATION.

"*Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son: whom he did predestinate, them he also called: whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*"—ROMANS viii. 29, 30.

1. "OUR beloved brother Paul," says St. Peter, "according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood; which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction," 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

2. It is not improbable, that among those things spoken by St. Paul, which are hard to be understood, the Apostle Peter might place what he speaks on this subject, in his eighth and ninth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. And, it is certain, not only the unlearned, but many of the most learned men in the world, and not the *unstable* only, but many who seemed to be well established in the truths of the Gospel, have for several centuries *wrested* these passages *to their own destruction.*

3. *Hard to be understood*, we may well allow them to be, when we consider how men of the strongest understanding, improved by all the advantages of education, have continually differed in judgment

concerning them. And this very consideration, that there is so wide a difference upon the head, between men of the greatest learning, sense, and piety, one might imagine would make all who now speak upon the subject, exceedingly wary and self-diffident. But I know not how it is that just the reverse is observed in every part of the Christian world. No writers upon earth appear more positive than those who write on this difficult subject. Nay, the same men, who, writing on any other subject, are remarkably modest and humble, on this alone lay aside all self-distrust,

"And speak *ex cathedrâ* infallible."

This is peculiarly observable of almost all those who assert the absolute decrees. But surely, it is possible to avoid this: whatever we propose may be proposed with modesty, and with deference to those wise and good men who are of a contrary opinion. And the rather, because so much has been said already on every part of the question, so many volumes have been written, that it is scarcely possible to say any thing which has not been said before. All I would offer at present, not to the lovers of contention, but to men of piety and candour, are a few short hints, which perhaps may cast some light on the text above recited.

4. The more frequently and carefully I have considered it, the more I have been inclined to think, that the Apostle is not here, (as many have supposed,) describing a chain of causes and effects; (this does not seem to have entered into his heart:) but simply showing *the method in which God works; the order* in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other. And this, I apprehend, will be clear to any serious and impartial inquirer, surveying the work of God either forward or backward: either from the beginning to the end, or from the end to the beginning.

5. And First, let us look forward on the whole work of God in the salvation of man, considering it from the beginning, the first point, till it terminates in glory. The first point is, The foreknowledge of God. God *foreknew* those in every nation, who would believe, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. But in order to throw light upon this dark question, it should be well observed, that when we speak of God's *foreknowledge*, we do not speak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For if we speak properly, there is no such thing as either *foreknowledge* or *afterknowledge* in God. All time, or rather all eternity, (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men,) being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another: but sees all things in one point of view, from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with every thing that exists therein, is present with him at once, so he sees at once, whatever it was, is, or will be to the end of time. But observe: we must not think they are, because he *knows* them. No; he knows them, because they are. Just as I, (if one

may be allowed to compare the things of men with the deep things of God,) now know the sun shines. Yet the sun does not shine because I know it: but I know it, because it shines. My knowledge *supposes* the sun to shine; but does not in any wise *cause* it. In like manner, God knows, that man sins; for he knows all things. Yet we do not sin because he knows it: but he knows it because we sin. And his knowledge *supposes* our sin, but does not in any wise *cause* it. In a word, God, looking on all ages from the creation to the consummation as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe, in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in nowise caused by his knowledge. Men are as *free* in believing, or not believing, as if he did not know it at all.

6. Indeed if man were not free, he could not be accountable, either for his thoughts, words, or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable either of reward or punishment; he would be incapable either of virtue or vice, of being either morally good or bad. If he had no more freedom than the sun, the moon, or the stars, he would be no more accountable than they. On supposition that he had no more freedom than they, the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward, and as liable to punishment as man: one would be as accountable as the other. Yea, and it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue or vice to him, as to ascribe it to the stock of a tree.

7. But to proceed. "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." This is the second step, (to speak after the manner of men: for in fact, there is nothing *before* or *after* in God.) In other words, God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love, shall be conformed to his image, shall be saved from all inward and outward sin, into all inward and outward holiness. Accordingly it is a plain, undeniable fact; all who truly believe in the name of the Son of God, do now "receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls:" and this in virtue of the unchangeable, irreversible, irresistible decree of God, "He that believeth shall be saved: and he that believeth not shall be damned."

8. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called." This is the third step: (still remembering that we speak after the manner of men.) To express it a little more largely. According to his fixed decree, that believers should be saved, those whom he foreknows as such, he calls both outwardly and inwardly: outwardly by the word of his grace, and inwardly by his Spirit. This inward application of his word to the heart, seems to be what some term *effectual calling*. And it implies, the calling them children of God; the *accepting* them *in the Beloved;* the justifying them "freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

9. "Whom he called, them he justified." This is the fourth step. It is generally allowed, that the word *justified* here is taken in a peculiar sense; that it made them just or righteous. He exe-

cuted his decree, "conforming them to the image of his Son," or, (as we usually speak,) *sanctified them.*

10. It remains, "whom he justified, them he glorified." This is the last step. Having made them "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," he gives them "the kingdom which was prepared for them before the world began." This is the order wherein, "according to the counsel of his will," [the plan he has laid down from eternity,] he saves those whom he foreknew, the true believers in every place and generation.

11. The same great work of salvation by faith, according to the foreknowledge and decree of God, may appear in a still clearer light, if we view it backward, from the end to the beginning. Suppose then you stood with the "great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people," who "give praise unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever:" you would not find one among them all that were entered into glory, who was not a witness of that great truth, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord:" not one of all that innumerable company, who was not *sanctified* before he was *glorified.* By holiness he was prepared for glory, according to the invariable will of the Lord, that the crown purchased by the blood of his Son, should be given to none but those who are renewed by his Spirit. He is become "the Author of eternal salvation" only "to them that obey him:" that obey him inwardly and outwardly; that are holy in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation.

12. And could you take a view of all those upon earth, who are now *sanctified*, you would find not one of these had been sanctified till after he was *called.* He was first called, not only with an outward call, by the word and the messengers of God, but likewise with an inward call, by his Spirit applying his word, enabling him to believe in the only begotten Son of God, and bearing testimony with his spirit that he was a child of God. And it was by this very mean they were all sanctified. It was by a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, that every one of them was enabled to love God. Loving God, he loved his neighbour as himself, and had power to walk in all his commandments blameless. This is a rule which admits of no exception. God *calls* a sinner his own, that is, justifies him before he sanctifies. And by this very thing, the consciousness of his favour, he works in him that grateful, filial affection, from which spring every good temper, and word, and work.

13. And who are they that are thus *called* of God, but those whom he had before *predestinated*, or decreed to "conform to the image of his Son?" This decree (still speaking after the manner of men) precedes every man's calling. (Every believer was predestinated before he was called.) For God calls none, but "according to the counsel of his will," according to this προθεσις, or plan of acting, which he had laid down before the foundation of the world.

14. Once more. As all that are called were predestinated, so all whom God has predestinated he *foreknew.* He knew, he saw them

as believers, and as such predestinated them to salvation, according to his eternal decree, "He that believeth shall be saved." Thus we see the whole process of the work of God, from the end to the beginning. Who are glorified? None but those who were first sanctified. Who are sanctified? None but those who were first justified? Who are justified? None but those who were first predestinated. Who are predestinated? None but those whom God foreknew as believers. Thus the purpose and work of God stand unshaken as the pillars of heaven, "He that believeth shall be saved: he that believeth not shall be damned." And thus God is clear from the blood of all men; since whoever perishes, perishes by his own act and deed. "They will not come unto me," says the Saviour of men: and "there is no salvation in any other." They "will not believe;" and there is no other way either to present or eternal salvation. Therefore their blood is upon their own head: and God is still "justified in his saying," that he "willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of his truth."

15. The sum of all is this. The Almighty All-wise God sees and knows, from everlasting to everlasting, all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal *now*. With him nothing is either past or future, but all things equally present. He has, therefore, if we speak according to the truth of things, no fore-knowledge, no after-knowledge. This would be ill consistent with the Apostle's words, "With him is no variableness or shadow of turning:" and with the account he gives of himself by the prophet, "I the Lord change not." Yet when he speaks to us, knowing whereof we are made, knowing the scantiness of our understanding, he lets himself down to our capacity, and speaks of himself after the manner of men. Thus, in condescension to our weakness, he speaks of his own *purpose*, *counsel*, *plan*, *fore-knowledge*. Not that God has any need of *counsel*, of *purpose*, or of *planning* his work beforehand. Far be it from us to impute these to the Most High; to measure him by ourselves! It is merely in compassion to us, that he speaks thus of himself as *foreknowing* the things in heaven or earth, and as *predestinating* or *fore-ordaining* them. But can we possibly imagine that these expressions are to be taken literally? To one who was so gross in his conceptions, might he not say, "Thinkest thou I am such an one as thyself?" Not so. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than thy ways. I know, decree, work, in such a manner as it is not possible for thee to conceive. But to give thee some faint, glimmering knowledge of my ways, I use the language of men, and suit myself to thy apprehensions, in this thy infant state of existence.

16. What is it then that we learn from this whole account? It is this and no more. 1, God knows all believers: 2, Wills that they should be saved from sin: 3, To that end justifies them: 4, Sanctifies: and 5, Takes them to glory.

O that men would praise the Lord for this his goodness! And that they would be content with this plain account of it, and not endeavour to wade into those mysteries which are too deep for angels to fathom!

SERMON LXIII.

GOD'S LOVE TO FALLEN MAN.

"*Not as the Transgression, so is the Free Gift.*"—ROMANS v. 15.

1. HOW exceedingly common, and how bitter is the outcry against our first parent, for the mischief which he not only brought upon himself, but entailed upon his latest posterity! It was by his wilful rebellion against God, "that sin entered into the world." "By one man's disobedience," as the Apostle observes, *the many*, οι πολλοι, as many as were then in the loins of their forefather, *were made*, or constituted *sinners:* not only deprived of the favour of God, but also of his image; of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness, and sunk partly into the image of the devil, in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers; partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and grovelling appetites. Hence also death entered into the world, with all his forerunners and attendants; pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy, as well as unholy passions and tempers.

2. "*For all this we may thank Adam,*" has been echoed down from generation to generation. The self-same charge has been repeated in every age and every nation where the oracles of God are known, in which alone this grand and important event has been discovered to the children of men. Has not *your* heart, and probably *your* lips too, joined in the general charge? How few are there of those who believe the scriptural relation of the Fall of Man, that have not entertained the same thought concerning our first parent? Severely condemning him, that, through wilful disobedience to the sole command of his Creator,

> "Brought death into the world, and all our wo."

3. Nay, it were well if the charge rested here: but it is certain it does not. It cannot be denied, that it frequently glances from Adam to his Creator. Have not thousands, even of those that are called Christians, taken the liberty to call his mercy, if not his justice also, into question, on this very account? Some indeed have done this a

little more modestly, in an oblique and indirect manner: but others have thrown aside the mask, and asked, "Did not God foresee that Adam would abuse his liberty? And did he not know the baneful consequences which this must naturally have on all his posterity? And why then did he permit that disobedience? Was it not easy for the Almighty to have prevented it?" He certainly did foresee the whole. This cannot be denied. "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." (Rather from all eternity, as the words απ' αιωνος properly signify.) And it was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him at the same time, that it was best upon the whole not to prevent it. He knew, that "not as the transgression, so is the free gift:" that the evil resulting from the former was not as the good resulting from the latter, not worthy to be compared with it. He saw that to permit the fall of the first man was far best for mankind in general: that abundantly more good than evil would accrue to the posterity of Adam by his fall: that if "sin abounded" thereby over all the earth, yet grace "would much more abound:" yea, and that to every individual of the human race, unless it was his own choice.

4. It is exceedingly strange that hardly any thing has been written, or at least published on this subject: nay, that it has been so little weighed or understood by the generality of Christians: especially considering that it is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a truth of the deepest importance; it being impossible, on any other principle,

> "To assert a gracious Providence,
> And justify the ways of God with men:"

and considering withal, how plain this important truth is, to all sensible and candid inquirers. May the Lover of Men open the eyes of our understanding, to perceive clearly, that by the fall of Adam mankind in general have gained a capacity,

First, of being more holy and happy on earth, and,

Secondly, of being more happy in heaven than otherwise they could have been.

1. And, first, mankind in general have gained by the fall of Adam, a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen. For if Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this: nothing more undeniable: the more thoroughly we consider the point, the more deeply shall we be convinced of it. Unless all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not see that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And thus death passed upon all" through him, "in whom all men sinned," Rom. v. 12. Was it not to remedy this very thing, that "the Word was made flesh?" that

"as in Adam all died, so in Christ all might be made alive?" Unless then *many* had been made sinners by the disobedience of one, by the obedience of one, *many* would not have been *made righteous*, ver. 18. So there would have been no room for that amazing display of the Son of God's love to mankind. There would have been no occasion for his "being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It could not then have been said, to the astonishment of all the hosts of heaven, "God so loved the world," yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or desire of returning to him, "that he gave his Son" out of his bosom, his only begotten Son, "to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Neither could we then have said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself:" or that he "made him to be sin," that is, a *sin-offering* "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." There would have been no such occasion for such "an Advocate with the Father," as "Jesus Christ the Righteous:" neither for his appearing "at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us."

2. What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this, there could then have been no such thing as faith in God, *thus loving the world*, giving his only Son for us men, and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, "as loving us and giving himself for us." There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. Indeed the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ: neither could Christ have been "made of God unto us," either "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, or redemption."

3. And the same grand blank which was in our faith, must likewise have been in our love. We might have loved the Author of our being, the Father of angels and men, as our Creator and Preserver: we might have said, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" But we could not have loved him under the nearest and dearest relation, "as delivering up his Son for us all." We might have loved the Son of God, as being "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person:" (although this ground seems to belong rather to the inhabitants of heaven and earth.) But we could not have loved him as "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," and "by that one oblation of himself once offered, making a full oblation, sacrifice, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world." We could not have been "made conformable to his death," nor "have known the power of his resurrection." We could not have loved the Holy Ghost as revealing to us the Father and the Son, as opening the eyes of our understanding, bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light, renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption. So that, in truth, what is now "in the sight of God, even the Father," not of fallible men, "pure religion and undefiled,"

would then have had no being: inasmuch as it wholly depends on those grand principles, "By grace ye are saved through faith: and Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

4. We see then what unspeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our first parent, with regard to faith: faith both in God the Father, who spared not his own Son, his only Son, but "wounded him for our transgressions," and "bruised him for our iniquities:" and in God the Son, who poured out his soul for us transgressors, and washed us in his own blood. We see what advantage we derive therefrom with regard to the love of God, both of God the Father, and God the Son. The chief ground of this love, as long as we remain in the body, is plainly declared by the Apostle, "We love him, because he first loved us." But the greatest instance of his love had never been given, if Adam had not fallen.

5. And as our faith, both in God the Father and the Son, receives an unspeakable increase, if not its very being from this grand event, as does also our love both of the Father and the Son: so does the love of our neighbour also, our benevolence to all mankind: which cannot but increase in the same proportion with our faith and love of God. For who does not apprehend the force of that inference drawn by the loving Apostle, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." If God *so* loved us—observe, the stress of the argument lies on this very point: *so loved us!* as to deliver up his only Son to die a cursed death for our salvation. "Beloved, what manner of love is this," wherewith God hath loved us? So as to give his *only Son!* In glory equal with the Father: in majesty co-eternal! What manner of love is this wherewith the only begotten Son of God hath loved us, as to *empty himself*, as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead; as to divest himself of that glory, which he had with the Father before the world began; as to "take upon him the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man!" And then to humble himself still further, "being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" If God *so* loved us, how ought we to love one another? But this motive to brotherly love had been totally wanting, if Adam had not fallen. Consequently we could not then have loved one another in so high a degree as we may now. Nor could there have been that height and depth in the command of our blessed Lord, "As I have loved you, so love one another."

6. Such gainers may we be by Adam's fall, with regard both to the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is another grand point, which, though little adverted to, deserves our deepest consideration. By that one act of our first parent, not only "sin entered into the world," but pain also, and was alike entailed on his whole posterity. And herein appeared, not only the justice, but the unspeakable goodness of God. For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! How much holiness and happiness out of pain!

7. How innumerable are the benefits which God conveys to the children of men through the channel of sufferings! So that it might well be said, "What are termed afflictions in the language of men, are in the language of God styled blessings." Indeed had there been no suffering in the world, a considerable part of religion, yea, and in some respects, the most excellent part, could have had no place therein: since the very existence of it depends on our suffering: so that had there been no pain, it could have had no being. Upon this foundation, even our suffering, it is evident all our passive graces, are built; yea, the noblest of all Christian graces, *love enduring all things*. Here is the ground for resignation to God, enabling us to say from the heart, in every trying hour, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" And what a glorious spectacle is this? Did it not constrain even a heathen to cry out, "*Ecce spectaculum Deo dignum!* See a sight worthy of God: a good man struggling with adversity, and superior to it." Here is the ground for confidence in God, both with regard to what we feel, and with regard to what we should fear, were it not that our soul is calmly stayed on him. What room could there be for trust in God, if there was no such thing as pain or danger? Who might not say then, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" It is by sufferings that our faith is tried, and, therefore, made more acceptable to God. It is in the day of trouble that we have occasion to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." And this is well pleasing to God, that we should own him in the face of danger; in defiance of sorrow, sickness, pain, or death.

8. Again: Had there been neither natural nor moral evil in the world, what must have become of patience, meekness, gentleness, long-suffering? It is manifest they could have had no being: seeing all these have evil for their object. If, therefore, evil had never entered into the world, neither could these have had any place in it. For who could have *returned good for evil*, had there been no evil-doer in the universe? How had it been possible, on that supposition, to *overcome evil with good?* Will you say, "But all these graces might have been divinely infused into the hearts of men." Undoubtedly they might: but if they had, there would have been no use or exercise for them. Whereas in the present state of things we can never long want occasion to exercise them. And the more they are exercised, the more all our graces are strengthened and increased. And in the same proportion as our resignation, our confidence in God, our patience and fortitude, our meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering, together with our faith and love of God and man increase, must our happiness increase, even in the present world.

9. Yet again: As God's permission of Adam's fall gave all his posterity a thousand opportunities of *suffering*, and thereby of exercising all those passive graces which increase both their holiness and happiness: so it gives them opportunities of *doing good* in number-

less instances, of exercising themselves in various good works, which otherwise could have had no being. And what exertions of benevolence, of compassion, of godlike mercy, had then been totally prevented? Who could then have said to the lover of men,

> "Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
> While listening to the wretches' cry,
> The widow's or the orphan's groan,
> On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
> The poor and needy to relieve;
> Myself, my all for them to give?"

It is the just observation of a benevolent man,

> ——"All wordly joys are less,
> Than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

Surely *in keeping* this commandment, if no other, there is great reward. "As we have time, let us do good unto all men;" good of every kind and in every degree. Accordingly the more good we do, (other circumstances being equal,) the happier we shall be. The more we deal our bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with garments; the more we relieve the stranger, and visit them that are sick or in prison: the more kind offices we do to those that groan under the various evils of human life: the more comfort we receive even in the present world; the greater the recompense we have in our own bosom.

10. To sum up what has been said under this head: As the more holy we are upon earth, the more happy we must be, (seeing there is an inseparable connexion between holiness and happiness;) as the more good we do to others, the more of present reward redounds into our own bosom: even as our sufferings for God lead us to *rejoice* in him "with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" therefore, the fall of Adam, First, by giving us an opportunity of being far more holy; Secondly, by giving us the occasions of doing innumerable good works, which otherwise could not have been done; and, Thirdly, by putting it into our power to suffer for God, whereby "the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us:" may be of such advantage to the children of men, even in the present life, as they will not thoroughly comprehend till they attain life everlasting.

11. It is then we shall be enabled fully to comprehend, not only the advantages which accrue at the present time to the sons of men by the fall of their first Parent, but the infinitely greater advantages which they may reap from it in eternity. In order to form some conception of this, we may remember the observation of the Apostle, "As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead." The most glorious stars will undoubtedly be those who are the most holy; who bear most of that image of God wherein they were created. The next in glory to these will be those who have been most abundant in good works: and next to them, those that have suffered most, according to the will of God. But

what advantages in every one of these respects, will the children of God receive in heaven, by God's permitting the introduction of pain upon earth, in consequence of sin? By occasion of this they attained many holy tempers, which otherwise could have had no being: resignation to God, confidence in him in times of trouble and danger, patience, meekness, gentleness, long suffering, and the whole train of passive virtues. And on account of this superior holiness they will then enjoy superior happiness. Again: every one will then "receive his own reward, according to his own labour." Every individual will be "rewarded according to his work." But the fall gave rise to innumerable good works, which could otherwise never have existed, such as ministering to the necessities of the saints, yea, relieving the distressed in every kind. And hereby innumerable stars will be added to their eternal crown. Yet again: there will be an abundant reward in heaven, for *suffering*, as well as for *doing* the will of God: "these light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Therefore that event, which occasioned the entrance of suffering into the world, has thereby occasioned, to all the children of God, an increase of glory to all eternity. For although the sufferings themselves will be at an end: although

> "The pain of life shall then be o'er,
> The anguish and distracting care;
> The sighing grief shall weep no more;
> And sin shall never enter there:"—

yet the joys occasioned thereby shall never end, but flow at God's right hand for evermore.

12. There is one advantage more that we reap from Adam's fall, which is not unworthy our attention. Unless in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their first Parent, every descendant of Adam, every child of man, must have personally answered for himself to God: it seems to be a necessary consequence of this, that if he had once fallen, once violated any command of God, there would have been no possibility of his rising again; there was no help, but he must have perished without remedy. For that Covenant knew not to show mercy: the word was, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now who would not rather be on the footing he is now; under a covenant of mercy? Who would wish to hazard a whole eternity upon one stake? Is it not infinitely more desirable, to be in a state wherein, though encompassed with infirmities, yet we do not run such a desperate risk, but if we fall, we may rise again? Wherein we may say,

> "My trespass is grown up to heaven!
> But, far above the skies,
> In Christ abundantly forgiven,
> I see thy mercies rise!"

13. In Christ! Let me entreat every serious person, once more to fix his attention here. All that has been said, all that can be said,

on these subjects, centres in this point. The fall of Adam produced the death of Christ! Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! Yea,

> "Let earth and heaven agree,
> Angels and men be joined,
> To celebrate with me
> The Saviour of mankind;
> To adore the all-atoning Lamb,
> And bless the sound of JESU'S Name!"

If God had prevented the fall of man, *The Word* had never been *made flesh:* nor had we ever "seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." Those mysteries had never been displayed, "which the very angels desire to look into." Methinks this consideration swallows up all the rest, and should never be out of our thoughts. Unless "by one man, judgment had come upon all men to condemnation," neither angels nor men could ever have known "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

14. See then, upon the whole, how little reason we have to repine at the fall of our first Parent, since herefrom we may derive such unspeakable advantages, both in time and eternity. See how small pretence there is for questioning the mercy of God in permitting that event to take place! Since therein, mercy, by infinite degrees, rejoices over judgment! Where then is the man that presumes to blame God, for not preventing Adam's sin? Should we not rather bless him from the ground of the heart, for therein laying the grand scheme of man's redemption, and making way for that glorious manifestation of his wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy? If indeed God had decreed before the foundation of the world, that millions of men should dwell in everlasting burnings, because Adam sinned, hundreds or thousands of years before they had a being; I know not who could thank him for this, unless the devil and his angels: seeing, on this supposition, all those millions of unhappy spirits, would be plunged into hell by Adam's sin, without any possible advantage from it. But, blessed be God, this is not the case. Such a decree never existed. On the contrary, every one born of a woman, may be an unspeakable gainer thereby: and none ever was or can be a loser, but by his own choice.

15. We see here a full answer to that plausible account "of the origin of evil," published to the world some years since, and supposed to be unanswerable: that it "necessarily resulted from the nature of matter, which God was not able to alter." It is very kind in this sweet-tongued orator to make an excuse for God! But there is really no occasion for it: God hath answered for himself. He made man in his own image, a spirit endued with understanding and liberty. Man abusing that liberty, produced evil; brought sin and pain into the world. This God permitted, in order to a fuller manifestation of his wisdom, justice, and mercy, by bestowing on all who would receive it, an infinitely greater happiness, than they could possibly have attained, if Adam had not fallen.

16. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Although a thousand particulars of "his judgments, and of his ways, are unsearchable" to us, and *past* our *finding out*, yet we may discern the general scheme, running through time into eternity. "According to the council of his own will," the plan he had laid before the foundation of the world, he created the parent of all mankind in his own image. And he permitted *all men* to be *made sinners, by the disobedience of* this *one* man, that, *by the obedience of one*, all who receive *the free gift*, may be infinitely holier and happier to all eternity!

SERMON LXIV.

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"*This is his Name, whereby he shall be called*, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—JEREMIAH xxiii. 6.

1. HOW dreadful, and how innumerable are the contests, which have arisen about religion! And not only among the children of this world, among those who knew not what true religion was; but even among the children of God, those who had experienced "the kingdom of God within them," who had tasted of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." How many of these in all ages, instead of joining together against the common enemy, have turned their weapons against each other, and so not only wasted their precious time, but hurt one another's spirits, weakened each other's hands, and so hindered the great work of their common Master! How many of the weak have hereby been offended! How many of the lame turned out of the way! How many sinners confirmed in their disregard of all religion, and their contempt of those that profess it! And how many of "the excellent ones upon earth" have been constrained to "weep in secret places!"

2. What would not every lover of God and his neighbour do, what would he not suffer, to remedy this sore evil? To remove contention from the children of God? To restore or preserve peace among them? What but a good conscience would he think too dear to part with, in order to promote this valuable end? And suppose we cannot "make [these] wars to cease in all the world," suppose we cannot reconcile the children of God to each other, however, let each do what he can, let him contribute, if it be but two mites, towards it. Happy are they, who are able, in any degree, to pro-

mote "peace and good-will among men!" Especially among good men; among those that are all listed under the banner of "the Prince of Peace:" and are, therefore, peculiarly engaged, "as much as lies in them, to live peaceably with all men."

3. It would be a considerable step towards this glorious end, if we could bring good men to understand one another. Abundance of disputes arise purely from the want of this, from mere misapprehension. Frequently, neither of the contending parties understands what his opponent means; whence it follows, that each violently attacks the other, while there is no real difference between them. And yet it is not always an easy matter to convince them of this; particularly when their passions are moved: it is then attended with the utmost difficulty. However, it is not impossible: especially when we attempt it, not trusting in ourselves, but having all our dependence upon him, with whom all things are possible. How soon is he able to disperse the cloud, to shine upon their hearts, and to enable them both to understand each other, and "the truth as it is in Jesus!"

4. One very considerable article of this truth is contained in the words above recited, "This is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." A truth this, which enters deep into the nature of Christianity, and, in a manner, supports the whole frame of it. Of this, undoubtedly, may be affirmed, what Luther affirms of a truth closely connected with it; it is, *Articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ:* the Christian church stands or falls with it. It is certainly the pillar and ground of that faith, of which alone cometh salvation: of that faith, which is found in all the children of God, and which "unless a man keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly."

5. Might not one, therefore, reasonably expect, that however they differed in others, all those who name the name of Christ, should agree in this point? But how far is this from being the case! There is scarce any wherein they are so little agreed: wherein those who all profess to follow Christ, seem so widely and irreconcileably to differ. I say *seem;* because I am thoroughly convinced, that many of them only seem to differ. The disagreement is more in words than in sentiments: they are much nearer in judgment than in language. And a wide difference in language there certainly is, not only between Protestants and Papists, but between Protestant and Protestant; yea, even between those who all believe Justification by Faith: who agree, as well in this, as in every other fundamental doctrine of the gospel.

6. But if the difference be more in *opinion* than real *experience*, and more in *expression* than in *opinion*, how can it be, that even the children of God should so vehemently contend with each other on the point? Several reasons may be assigned for this: The chief is their not understanding one another; joined with too keen an attachment to their *opinions*, and particular modes of *expression*.

In order to remove this, at least in some measure; in order to our

understanding one another on this head, I shall, by the help of God, endeavour to show,

I. What is the Righteousness of Christ;

II. When, and in what sense, it is imputed to us:

And conclude with a short and plain application.

And, I. What is the righteousness of Christ? It is twofold, either his divine or his human righteousness.

1. His divine righteousness belongs to his divine nature, as he is ὁ ὤν, He that existeth; "over all, God, blessed for ever:" the Supreme, the Eternal: "Equal with the Father, as touching his Godhead, though inferior to the Father as touching his manhood." Now, this is his eternal, essential, immutable holiness: his infinite mercy and truth: In all which, "he and the Father are one."

But I do not apprehend that the divine righteousness of Christ is immediately concerned in the present question. I believe few, if any, do now contend, for the *imputation* of *this* righteousness to us. Whoever believes the doctrine of imputation, understands it chiefly, if not solely, of his human righteousness.

2. The *human righteousness* of Christ, belongs to him in his human nature; as he is "the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." This is either *internal* or *external*. His internal righteousness is the image of God, stamped on every power and faculty of the soul. It is a copy of his divine righteousness, so far as it can be imparted to a human spirit. It is a transcript of the divine purity, the divine justice, mercy, and truth. It includes love, reverence, resignation to his Father; humility, meekness, gentleness; love to lost mankind, and every other holy and heavenly temper: and all these in the highest degree, without any defect, or mixture of unholiness.

3. It was the least part of his *external righteousness*, that he did nothing amiss: that he knew not outward sin of any kind, neither was "guile found in his mouth:" that he never spoke one improper word, nor did one improper action. Thus far it is only a *negative* righteousness, though such an one as never did, nor ever can belong to any one that is born of a woman, save himself alone. But even his outward righteousness was *positive too*. *He did all things well.* In every word of his tongue, in every work of his hands, he did precisely the "will of him that sent him." In the whole course of his life, he did the will of God on earth as angels do it in heaven. All he acted and spoke was exactly right in every circumstance. The whole and every part of his obedience was complete. "He fulfilled all righteousness."

4. But his obedience implied more than all this: It implied, not only doing, but suffering: suffering the whole will of God, from the time he came into the world, till "he bore our sins in his own body upon the tree:" yea, till having made a full atonement for them, *He* bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. This is usually termed the *passive* righteousness of Christ, the former, his *active* righteousness. But as the active and passive righteousness of Christ were never in

fact separated from each other, so we never need separate them at all, either in speaking or even in thinking. And it is with regard to both these conjointly, that Jesus is called, "The Lord our Righteousness."

II. But when is it, that any of us may truly say, "The Lord our Righteousness?" In other words, when is it that the righteousness of Christ is *imputed* to us, and in what sense is it imputed?

1. Look through all the world, and all the men therein are either believers or unbelievers. The first thing, then, which admits of no dispute among reasonable men is this. To all believers the righteousness of Christ is imputed; to unbelievers it is not.

"But when is it imputed?" When they believe. In that very hour the righteousness of Christ is theirs. It is imputed to every one that believes, as soon as he believes: faith and the righteousness of Christ are inseparable. For, if he believe according to Scripture, he believes in the righteousness of Christ. There is no true faith, that is, justifying faith, which hath not the righteousness of Christ for its object.

2. It is true, believers may not all speak alike; they may not all use the same language. It is not to be expected that they should: we cannot reasonably require it of them. A thousand circumstances may cause them to vary from each other, in the manner of expressing themselves. But a difference of expression does not necessarily imply a difference of sentiment. Different persons may use different expressions, and yet mean the same thing. Nothing is more common than this, although we seldom make sufficient allowance for it. Nay, it is not easy for the same persons, when they speak of the same thing at a considerable distance of time, to use exactly the same expressions, even though they retain the same sentiments. How then can we be rigorous in requiring others to use just the same expressions with us?

3. We may go a step farther yet. Men may differ from us in their opinions, as well as their expressions, and nevertheless be partakers with us of the same precious faith. It is possible they may not have a *distinct apprehension* of the very blessing which they enjoy. Their *ideas* may not be so *clear*, and yet their experience may be as sound as ours. There is a wide difference between the natural faculties of men, their understandings in particular. And that difference is exceedingly increased, by the manner of their education. Indeed, this alone may occasion an inconceivable difference, in their opinions of various kinds. And why not, upon this head, as well as on any other? But still, though their opinions as well as expressions, may be confused and inaccurate, their hearts may cleave to God through the Son of his love, and be truly interested in his righteousness.

4. Let us, then, make all that allowance to others, which, were we in their place, we would desire for ourselves. Who is ignorant (to touch again on that circumstance only) of the amazing power

of education? And who that knows it, can expect, suppose a member of the church of Rome, either to think or speak clearly on this subject? And yet, if we had heard even dying Bellarmine cry out, when he was asked, "Unto which of the saints wilt thou turn?" "Fidere meritis Christi tutissimum:—It is safest to trust in the merits of Christ:" would we have affirmed that, notwithstanding his wrong opinions, he had no share in his righteousness?

5. "But in what sense is this righteousness imputed to believers?" In this: all believers are forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of any thing in them, or of any thing that ever was, that is, or ever can be done by them, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for them. I say again, not for the sake of any thing in them, or done by them, of their own righteousness or works. "Not for works of righteousness which we have done, but of his own mercy he saved us." "By grace ye are saved through faith.—Not of works, lest any man should boast:" but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ hath done and suffered for us. We are "justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." And this is not only the mean of our *obtaining* the favour of God, but of our continuing therein. It is thus we come to God at first: it is by the same we come unto him ever after. We walk in one and the same *new* and *living* way, till our spirit return to God.

6. And this is the doctrine, which I have constantly believed and taught, for near eight and twenty years. This I published to all the world in the year 1738, and ten or twelve times since, in those words, and many others to the same effect, extracted from the homilies of our church:—"These things must necessarily go together in our justification; upon God's part, his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part, the satisfaction of God's justice; and on our part, faith in the merits of Christ. So that the grace of God doth not shut out the righteousness of God in our justification, but only shutteth out the righteousness of man, as to *deserving* our justification." "That we are justified by faith alone, is spoken to take away clearly all merit of our works, and wholly to ascribe the *merit* and *deserving* of our justification to Christ only. Our justification comes freely of the mere mercy of God. For whereas all the world was not able to pay any part toward our ransom, it pleased him, without any of our deserving, to prepare for us Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be paid, and his justice satisfied. Christ, therefore, is now the righteousness of all them that truly believe in him."

7. The hymns published a year or two after this, and since republished several times, (a clear testimony that my judgment was still the same) speak full to the same purpose. To cite all the passages to this effect, would be to transcribe a great part of the volumes. Take one for all, which was reprinted seven years ago, five years ago, two years ago, and some months since.

"Jesu, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress:
'Midst flaming worlds in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

The whole hymn expresses the same sentiment from the beginning to the end.

8. In the Sermon on Justification, published nineteen, and again seven or eight years ago, I express the same thing in these words, p. 87. "In consideration of this, that the Son of God hath 'tasted death for every man,' God hath now 'reconciled the world unto himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses.' So that for the sake of his well-beloved Son, of what he hath done and suffered for us, God now vouchsafes on one only condition, (which himself also enables us to perform,) both to remit the punishment due to our sins, to reinstate us in his favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the earnest of life eternal."

9. This is more largely and particularly expressed in the Treatise on Justification, which I published last year. "If we take the phrase of *imputing Christ's righteousness*, for the bestowing (as it were) the righteousness of Christ, including his obedience, as well passive as active in the return of it; that is, in the privileges, blessings, and benefits purchased by it: so a believer may be said to be justified, by *the righteousness of Christ imputed.* The meaning is, God justifies the believer, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, and not for any righteousness of his own. So Calvin, (Institut. 1. 2. c. 17,) 'Christ, by his obedience, procured and merited for us grace or favour with God the Father. Again, Christ, by his obedience, procured or purchased righteousness for us. And yet again: all such expressions as these, that we are justified by the grace of God, that Christ is our righteousness, that righteousness was procured for us by the death and resurrection of Christ, import the same thing:' namely, that the righteousness of Christ, both his active and passive righteousness, is the meritorious cause of our justification, and has procured for us at God's hand, that upon our believing, we should be accounted righteous by him." Page 5.

10. But, perhaps, some will object, "Nay, but you affirm, that *faith is imputed to us for righteousness.*" St. Paul affirms this over and over; therefore I affirm it too. Faith is imputed for righteousness to every believer; namely, faith in the righteousness of Christ, but this is exactly the same thing which has been said before. For by that expression, I mean neither more nor less than that we are justified by faith, not by works: or that every believer is forgiven and accepted, merely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered.

11. "But is not a believer invested or clothed with the righteousness of Christ?" Undoubtedly he is. And accordingly the words above recited are the language of every believing heart:

"Jesu, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

That is, for the sake of thy active and passive righteousness, I am forgiven and accepted of God.

"But must not we put off the filthy rags of our own righteousness, before we can put on the spotless righteousness of Christ?" Certainly we must; that is, in plain terms, we must *repent* before we can *believe the gospel.* We must be cut off from dependence upon ourselves, before we can depend upon Christ. We must cast away all confidence in our own righteousness, or we cannot have a true confidence in his. Till we are delivered from trusting in any thing that we do, we cannot thoroughly trust in what he has done and suffered. First, "we receive the sentence of death in ourselves;" then "we trust in him that lived and died for us."

12. "But do not you believe *inherent* righteousness?" Yes, in its proper place: not as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, but as the *fruit* of it: not in the place of *imputed* righteousness, but as consequent upon it. That is, I believe God *implants* righteousness in every one to whom he has *imputed* it. I believe "Jesus Christ is made of God unto us sanctification," as well as righteousness: or, that God sanctifies, as well as justifies, all them that believe in him. They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed, are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God, "after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holinesss."

13. "But do not you put faith in the room of Christ, or of his righteousness?" By no means. I take particular care to put each of these in its proper place. The righteousness of Christ is the whole and sole *foundation* of all our hope. It is by faith that the Holy Ghost enables us to build upon this foundation. God gives this faith. In that moment we are accepted of God: and yet, not for the sake of that faith, but of what Christ has done and suffered for us. You see, each of these has its proper place, and neither clashes with the other: we believe, we love; we endeavour to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. Yet,

"While thus we bestow
Our moments below,
Ourselves we forsake,
And refuge in Jesus's righteousness take.
His passion alone,
The foundation we own:
And pardon we claim,
And eternal redemption in Jesus's Name."

14. I, therefore, no more deny the righteousness of Christ, than I deny the godhead of Christ. And a man may full as justly charge me with denying the one as the other. Neither do I deny *imputed righteousness:* this is another unkind and unjust accusation. I always did, and do still continually affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer. But who deny it? Why all infidels, whether baptized or unbaptized: all who affirm the glorious gospel

of our Lord Jesus Christ to be a *cunningly* devised fable. All Socinians and Arians: all who deny the supreme godhead of the Lord that bought them. They, of consequence, deny his divine righteousness, as they suppose him to be a mere creature. And they deny his human righteousness, as imputed to any man, seeing they believe every one is accepted *for his own righteousness.*

15. The human righteousness of Christ, at least the imputation of it, as the whole and sole meritorious cause, of the justification of a sinner before God, is likewise denied by the members of the church of Rome: by all of them who are true to the principles of their own church. But undoubtedly there are many among them whose experience goes beyond their principles: who, though they are far from expressing themselves justly, yet feel what they know not how to express. Yea, although their conceptions of this great truth, be as crude as their expressions, yet *with their hearts they believe;* they rest on Christ alone, both unto present and eternal salvation.

16. With these we may rank those even in the reformed churches, who are usually termed *Mystics.* One of the chief of these in the present century, (at least in England,) was Mr. Law. It is well known that he absolutely and zealously denied the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, as zealously as Robert Barclay, who scruples not to say, "Imputed righteousness! imputed nonsense." The body of the people known by the name of Quakers, espouse the same sentiment. Nay, the generality of those who profess themselves members of the *Church of England,* are either totally ignorant of the matter, and know nothing about *imputed righteousness,* or deny this and justification by faith together, as destructive of good works. To these we may add a considerable number of the people vulgarly styled Anabaptists, together with thousands of Presbyterians and Independents, lately enlightened by the writings of Dr. Taylor. On the last I am not called to pass any sentence: I leave them to him that made them. But will any one dare to affirm, that all Mystics, (such as Mr. Law in particular,) all Quakers, all Presbyterians or Independents, and all members of the Church of England, who are not clear in their opinions or expressions, are void of all Christian experience? That consequently they are all in a state of damnation, "without hope, without God in the world?" However confused their ideas may be, however improper their language, may there not be many of them whose hearts are right toward God, and who effectually know "the Lord our righteousness?"

17. But, blessed be God, we are not among those who are so dark in their expressions and conceptions. We no more deny the *phrase* than the *thing;* but we are unwilling to obtrude it on other men. Let them use either this or such other expressions as they judge to be more exactly scriptural, provided their hearts rest only on what Christ has done and suffered, for pardon, grace, and glory. I cannot express this better than in Mr. Hervey's words, worthy to be written in letters of gold. "We are not solicitous as to any *particular set of phrases.* Only let men be humbled as repenting crimi-

nals at Christ's feet, let them rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, and they are undoubtedly in the way to a blessed immortality."

18. Is there any need, is there any possibility of saying more? Let us only abide by this declaration, and all the contention about this or that *particular phrase*, is torn up by the roots. Keep to this: "All who are humbled as repenting criminals at Christ's feet, and rely as devoted pensioners on his merits, are in the way to a blessed immortality:" and what room for dispute? Who denies this? Do we not all meet on this ground? What then shall we wrangle about? A man of peace here proposes terms of accommodation to all the contending parties. We desire no better. We accept of the terms. We subscribe to them with heart and hand. Whoever refuses so to do, set a mark upon that man! He is an enemy of peace, a troubler of Israel, a disturber of the church of God.

19. In the mean time, what we are afraid of is this: lest any should use the phrase, "The righteousness of Christ," or, "The righteousness of Christ is imputed to me," as a cover for his unrighteousness. We have known this done a thousand times. A man has been reproved, suppose, for drunkenness. "O," said he, "I pretend to no righteousness of *my own;* Christ is *my righteousness.*" Another has been told, that "the extortioner, the unjust, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He replies with all assurance, "I am unjust in myself, but I have a spotless righteousness in Christ." And thus, though a man be as far from the practice as from the tempers of a Christian, though he neither has the mind which was in Christ, nor in any respect walks as he walked, yet he has armour of proof against all conviction in what he calls the *righteousness of Christ.*

20. It is the seeing so many deplorable instances of this kind which makes us sparing in the use of these expressions. And I cannot but call upon all of you, who use them frequently, and beseech you in the name of God our Saviour, whose you are, and whom you serve, earnestly to guard all that hear you, against this accursed abuse of them. O warn them, (it may be they will hear *your* voice,) against "continuing in sin that grace may abound!" Warn them against making "Christ the minister of sin!" Against making void that solemn decree of God, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," by a vain imagination of being *holy in Christ.* O warn them, that if they remain unrighteous, the righteousness of Christ will profit them nothing! Cry aloud, (is there not a cause?) that for this very end the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, that "the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us," and that we may "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

It remains only to make a short and plain Application. And, first, I would address myself to you, who violently oppose these expressions, and are ready to condemn all who use them as Antinomians. But is not this bending the bow too much the other way? Why should you quarrel with *them*, for using the phrases they like, any more than they with *you*, for taking the same liberty? Or, if they do quarrel with you upon that account, do not imitate the bigotry

which you blame. At least, allow *them* the liberty which they ought to allow *you*. And why should you be angry at an *expression?* "O, it has been abused." And what expression has not? However, the abuse may be removed, and at the same time the use remain. Above all, be sure to retain the important sense which is couched under that expression. All the blessings I enjoy, all I hope for in time and in eternity, are given wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for me.

I would, secondly, add a few words to you who are fond of these expressions. And permit me to ask, Do not I allow enough? What can any reasonable man desire more? I allow the whole *sense* which you contend for; that we have every blessing *through the righteousness of God our Saviour*. I allow *you* to use whatever expressions you choose, and that a thousand times over: only guarding them against that dreadful abuse, which you are as deeply concerned to prevent as I am. I myself frequently use the expression in question, *imputed righteousness:* and often put this and the like expressions into the mouths of a whole congregation. But allow me liberty of conscience herein: allow me the right of private judgment. Allow me to use it just as often as I judge it preferable to any other expression. And be not angry with me, if I cannot judge it proper to use any one expression every two minutes. *You* may, if you please: but do not condemn me because I do not. Do not, for this, represent me as a Papist, or "an enemy to the righteousness of Christ." Bear with *me*, as I do with *you:* else how shall we "fulfil the law of Christ?" Do not make tragical outcries, as though I were "subverting the very foundations of Christianity." Whoever does this, does me much wrong: the Lord lay it not to his charge! I lay, and have done for many years, the very same foundation with you. And indeed "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ." I build inward and outward holiness thereon, as you do, even by faith. Do not, therefore, suffer any distaste, or unkindness, no, not any shyness or coldness in your heart. If there were a *difference in opinion*, where is our religion, if we cannot think and let think? What hinders but you may forgive *me* as easily as I forgive *you?* How much more, when there is only *a difference of expression?* Nay, hardly so much as that? All the dispute being only, whether a particular mode of expression shall be used *more or less frequently?* Surely we must earnestly desire to contend with one another, before we can make this a bone of contention! O let us not any more, for such very trifles as these, give our common enemies room to blaspheme! Rather let us at length cut off occasion from them that seek occasion! Let us at length, (O why was it not done before?) join hearts and hands in the service of our great Master. As we have "one Lord, one Faith, one Hope of our calling," let us all strengthen each other's hands in God, and with one heart and one mouth declare to all mankind, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

SERMON LXV.

THE GREAT DELIVERANCE.

"*The earnest expectation of the Creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*

"*For the Creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it.*

"*Yet in hope that the Creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.*

"*For we know that the whole Creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.*"—ROMANS viii. 19—22.

1. NOTHING is more sure, than that as "the Lord is loving to every man," so "his mercy is over all his works;" all that have sense, all that are capable of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery. In consequence of this, "he openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness: he prepareth food for cattle," as well as "herbs for the children of men." He provideth for the fowls of the air, "feeding the young ravens when they cry unto him." "He sendeth the springs into the rivers, that run among the hills," to give drink to every beast of the field, and that even "the wild asses may quench their thirst." And suitably to this, he directs us to be tender of even meaner creatures, to show mercy to these also. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," (a custom which is observed in the eastern countries even to this day.) And this is by no means contradicted by St. Paul's question, "Doth God take care for oxen?" Without doubt he does. We cannot deny it, without flatly contradicting his word. The plain meaning of the Apostle is, Is this all that is implied in the text? Hath it not a farther meaning? Does it not teach us, We are to feed the bodies of those whom we desire to feed our souls? Meantime, it is certain, God "giveth grass for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men."

2. But how are these scriptures reconcileable to the present state of things? How are they consistent with what we daily see round about us, in every part of the creation? If the Creator and Father of every living thing, is rich in mercy towards all: if he does not overlook or despise any of the works of his own hands: if he wills even the meanest of them to be happy, according to their degree: how comes it to pass, that such a complication of evils oppresses, yea, overwhelms them? How is it, that misery of all kinds over-

spreads the face of the earth? This is a question which has puzzled the wisest philosophers in all ages. And it cannot be answered without having recourse to the Oracles of God. But taking these for our guide, we may inquire,

I. What was the original state of the brute creation?

II. In what state is it at present? And,

III. In what state will it be, at the manifestation of the children of God?

I. 1. We may inquire, in the first place, What was the original state of the brute creation? And may not we learn this, even from the place which was assigned them; namely, the garden of God? All the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, were with Adam in Paradise. And there is no question but their state was suited to their place; it was paradisiacal; perfectly happy. Undoubtedly it bore a near resemblance to the state of man himself. By taking, therefore, a short view of the one, we may conceive the other. Now "man was made in the image of GOD." But "God is a spirit." So therefore was man. Only that spirit being designed to dwell on earth, was lodged in an earthly tabernacle. As such, he had an innate principle of *self-motion.* And so, it seems, has every spirit in the universe; this being the proper distinguishing difference between spirit and matter, which is totally, essentially passive and inactive, as appears from a thousand experiments. He was, after the likeness of his Creator, endued with *understanding*, a capacity of apprehending whatever objects were brought before it, and of judging concerning them. He was endued with a *will*, exerting itself in various affections and passions: and lastly, with *liberty*, or freedom of choice, without which endowment all the rest would have been in vain, and he would have been no more capable of serving his Creator, than a piece of earth or marble. He would have been as incapable of vice or virtue, as any part of the inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted.

2. How far his power of self-motion then extended, it is impossible for us to determine. It is probable, that he had a far higher degree, both of swiftness and strength, than any of the lower creatures. It is certain, he had such strength of understanding as no man ever since had. His understanding was perfect in its kind: capable of apprehending all things clearly, and judging concerning them according to truth, without any mixture of error. His will had no wrong bias of any sort, but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring understanding; embracing nothing but good, and every good in proportion to its degree of intrinsic goodness. His liberty likewise was wholly guided by his understanding: he chose or refused, according to its direction. Above all, (which was his highest excellence, far more valuable than all the rest put together,) he was a creature capable of God; capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. And, in fact, he did know God, did unfeignedly love, and uniformly obey him.

This was the supreme perfection of man, (as it is of all intelligent beings,) the continually seeing, and loving, and obeying the Father of the spirits of all flesh. From this right state, and right use of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed. In this the essence of his happiness consisted; but it was increased by all the things that were round about him. He saw, with unspeakable pleasure, the order, the beauty, the harmony, of all the creatures; of all animated, all inanimate nature; the serenity of the skies, the sun walking in brightness, the sweetly variegated clothing of the earth; the trees, the fruits, the flowers;

"And liquid lapse of murmuring streams."

Nor was this pleasure interrupted by evil of any kind. It had no alloy of sorrow or pain, whether of body or mind. For while he was innocent he was impassive, incapable of suffering. Nothing could stain his purity of joy. And to crown all, he was immortal.

3. To this creature, endued with all these excellent faculties, thus qualified for his high charge, God said, "Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth," Gen. i. 28. And so the Psalmist, "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," Psal. viii. 6, &c. So that man was God's vicegerent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation.

4. But what blessings were those that were then conveyed, through man, to the lower creatures? What was the original state of the brute creatures, when they were first created? This deserves a more attentive consideration than has been usually given it. It is certain these, as well as man, had an innate principle of *self-motion:* and that, at least, in as high a degree as they enjoy it at this day. Again: They were endued with a degree of *understanding*, not less than that they are possessed of now. They had also a *will*, including various passions, which, likewise, they still enjoy. And they had *liberty*, a power of choice, a degree of which is still found in every living creature. Nor can we doubt, but their understanding too was, in the beginning, perfect in its kind. Their passions and affections were regular, and their choice always guided by their understanding.

5. What then is the barrier between men and brutes? The line which they cannot pass? It was not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term: exchange it for the plain word understanding: and who can deny that brutes have this? We may as well deny that they have sight or hearing. But it is this; man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe, that they

are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute: the great gulf which they cannot pass over. And, as a loving obedience to God was the perfection of men, so a loving obedience to man was the perfection of brutes. And as long as they continued in this, they were happy after their kind: happy in the right state and the right use of all their respective faculties. Yea, and so long they had some shadowy resemblance of even *moral goodness*. For they had gratitude to man for benefits received, and a reverence for him. They had likewise a kind of benevolence to each other, unmixed with any contrary temper. How *beautiful* many of them were, we may conjecture from that which still remains: and that, not only in the noblest creatures, but in those of the lowest order. And they were all surrounded, not only with plenteous food, but with every thing that could give them pleasure: pleasure unmixed with pain, for pain was not yet; it had not entered into Paradise. And they too were immortal. For "God made not death; neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living."

6. How true then is that word, "God saw every thing that he had made: and behold it was very good." But how far is this from being the present case! In what a condition is the whole lower world! To say nothing of inanimate nature, wherein all the elements seem to be out of course, and by turns to fight against man. Since man rebelled against his Maker, in what a state is all animated nature! Well might the Apostle say of this, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." This directly refers to the brute creation. In what state this is at present we are now to consider.

II. 1. As all the blessings of God in Paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication, between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that *the creature*, every creature, "was subjected to vanity:" to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils. *Not*, indeed, "willingly;" not by its own choice; not by any act or deed of its own: "but by reason of him that subjected it;" by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil.

2. But in what respect was *the creature*, every creature, then "made subject to vanity?" What did the meaner creatures suffer, when man rebelled against God? It is probable, they sustained much loss, even in the lower faculties; their vigour, strength, and swiftness. But, undoubtedly, they suffered far more in their understanding, more than we can easily conceive. Perhaps, insects and worms had then as much understanding as the most intelligent brutes have now, whereas millions of creatures have, at present, little more understanding than the earth on which they crawl, or the rock to which

they adhere. They suffered still more in their will, in their passions, which were then variously distorted, and frequently set in flat opposition to the little understanding that was left them. Their liberty, likewise, was greatly impaired, yea, in many cases, totally destroyed. They are still utterly enslaved to irrational appetites, which have the full dominion over them. The very foundations of their nature are out of course, are turned upside down. A man is deprived of *his* perfection, his loving obedience to God, so brutes are deprived of *their* perfection, their loving obedience to man. The far greater part of them flee from him, studiously avoid his hated presence. The most of the rest set him at open defiance, yea, destroy him, if it be in their power. A few only, those we term domestic animals, retain more or less of their original disposition, (through the mercy of God,) love him still, and pay obedience to him.

3. Setting these few aside, how little shadow of good, of gratitude, of benevolence, of any right temper is now to be found in any part of the brute creation! On the contrary, what savage fierceness, what unrelenting cruelty, are invariably observed in thousands of creatures, yea, are inseparable from their natures! Is it only the lion, the tiger, the wolf, among the inhabitants of the forests and plains; the shark and a few more voracious monsters among the inhabitants of the waters; or the eagle among birds, that tears the flesh, sucks the blood, and crushes the bones of its helpless fellow-creatures? Nay, the harmless fly, the laborious ant, the painted butterfly, are treated in the same merciless manner even by the innocent songsters of the grove! The innumerable tribes of poor insects are continually devoured by them. And whereas there is but a small number, comparatively, of beasts of prey on the earth, it is quite otherwise in the liquid element; there are but few inhabitants of the waters, whether of the sea, or of the rivers, which do not devour whatsoever they can master. Yea, they exceed herein all the beasts of the forests, and all the birds of prey. For none of these have been ever observed to prey upon their own species;

Sævis inter se convenit ursis:

Even savage bears will not each other tear.

But the water-savages swallow up all, even of their own kind, that are smaller and weaker than themselves: yea, such, at present, is the miserable constitution of the world, to such *vanity* is it now *subjected*, that an immense majority of creatures, perhaps a million to one, can no otherwise preserve their own lives, than by destroying their fellow-creatures.

4. And is not the very form, the outward appearance of many of the creatures, as horrid as their dispositions? Where is the beauty which was stamped upon them, when they came first out of the hands of their Creator? There is not the least trace of it left: so far from it, that they are shocking to behold! Nay, they are not only terrible and grisly to look upon, but deformed, and that to a high degree. Yet their features, ugly as they are at best, are fre-

quently made more deformed than usual, when they are distorted by pain, which they cannot avoid, any more than the wretched sons of men. Pain of various kinds, weakness, sickness, diseases innumerable, come upon them, perhaps from within, perhaps from one another, perhaps from the inclemency of seasons, from fire, hail, snow, or storm, or from a thousand causes which they cannot foresee or prevent.

5. Thus, "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men." And not on man only, but on those creatures also that *did not sin after the similitude of Adam's transgression.* And not death alone came upon them, but all its train of preparatory evils: pain, and ten thousand sufferings. Nor these only, but likewise all those irregular passions, all those unlovely tempers, (which, in men, are sins, and even in brutes, are sources of misery,) *passed upon all* the inhabitants of the earth, and remain in all, except the children of God.

6. During this season of *vanity*, not only the feebler creatures are continually destroyed by the stronger; not only the strong are frequently destroyed by those that are of equal strength: but both the one and the other are exposed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy, man. And if his swiftness or strength is not equal to theirs, yet his art more than supplies that defect. By this he eludes all their force, how great soever it be: by this he defeats all their swiftness, and, notwithstanding their various shifts and contrivances, discovers all their retreats. He pursues them over the widest plains, and through the thickest forests. He overtakes them in the fields of air, he finds them out in the depths of the sea. Nor are the mild and friendly creatures, who still own his sway, and are duteous to his commands, secured thereby from more than brutal violence, from outrage and abuse of various kinds. Is the generous horse, that serves his master's necessity or pleasure, with unwearied diligence: is the faithful dog, that waits the motion of his hand, or his eye, exempt from this? What returns for their long and faithful service, do many of these poor creatures find! And what a dreadful difference is there between what they suffer from their fellow-brutes, and what they suffer from the tyrant, man! The lion, the tiger, or the shark, gives them pain from mere necessity, in order to prolong their own life; and put them out of their pain at once. But the human shark, without any such necessity, torments them of his own free choice: and, perhaps, continues their lingering pain, till, after months or years, death signs their release.

III. 1. But will *the creature*, will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition? God forbid that we should affirm this; yea, or even entertain such a thought! While "the whole creation groaneth together," (whether men attend or not,) their groans are not dispersed in idle air, but enter into the ears of him that made them. While his creatures "travail together in pain," he knoweth all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth, which shall be accomplished in its season. He seeth "the earnest

expectation" wherewith the whole animated creation "waiteth for" that final "manifestation of the sons of God:" in which "they themselves also shall be delivered," (not by annihilation: annihilation is not deliverance,) "from the" present "bondage of corruption, into" a measure of "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

2. Nothing can be more express. Away with vulgar prejudices, and let the plain word of God take place. They "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty:" even a measure, according as they are capable, of "the liberty of the children of God."

A general view of this is given us in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. When He that "sitteth on the great white throne," hath pronounced, "Behold, I make all things new:" when the word is fulfilled, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and they shall be his people: and God himself shall be with them and be their God:" then the following blessing shall take place, (not only on the children of men; there is no such restriction in the text; but) on every creature according to its capacity. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

3. To descend to a few particulars. The whole brute creation will then, undoubtedly, be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness, which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in Paradise, but to a degree of it, as much higher than that, as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm. And whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase, being exalted and refined in a manner, which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. The liberty they then had will be completely restored, and they will be free in all their motions. They will be delivered from all irregular appetites, from all unruly passions, from every disposition that is either evil in itself, or has any tendency to evil. No rage will be found in any creature, no fierceness, no cruelty, or thirst for blood. So far from it, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," Isaiah xi. 6, &c.

4. Thus, in that day, all the vanity to which they are now helplessly subject, will be abolished: they will suffer no more, either from within or without: the days of their groaning are ended. At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt, but all the horridness of their appearance, and all the deformity of their aspect will vanish away, and be exchanged for their primeval beauty. And with their beauty their happiness will return, to which there can then

be no obstruction. As there will be nothing within, so there will be nothing without, to give them any uneasiness: no heat or cold, no storm or tempest, but one perennial spring. In the new earth, as well as in the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but every thing that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness. As a recompense for what they once suffered, while under the *bondage of corruption*, when God has *renewed the face of the earth*, and their corruptible body has put on incorruption, they shall enjoy happiness, suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end.

5. But though I doubt not, that the Father of all has a tender regard for even his lowest creatures, and that, in consequence of this, he will make them large amends for all they suffer while under their present bondage, yet I dare not affirm, that he has an *equal regard* for them and for the children of men. I do not believe, that

> "He sees *with equal eyes*, as Lord of all,
> A hero perish, or a sparrow fall!"

By no means. This is exceeding pretty; but it is absolutely false. For though

> "Mercy, with truth and endless grace,
> O'er all his works doth reign,
> Yet chiefly he delights to bless
> His favourite creature, MAN."

God regards his meanest creatures much: but he regards man much more. He does not *equally* regard a hero and a sparrow; the best of men and the lowest of brutes. "How *much more* does your heavenly Father care for you?" says he who is "in the bosom of the Father." Those who thus strain the point, are clearly confuted by his question, "Are not ye *much better* than they." Let it suffice, that God regards every thing that he hath made, in its own order, and in proportion to that measure of his own image, which he has stamped upon it.

6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture concerning the brute creation? What if it should then please the All-wise, the All-gracious Creator, to raise them higher in the scale of beings? What if it should please him, when he makes us *equal to angels*, to make them what we are now? Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being? If it should be so, ought our eye to be evil, because he is good? However this be, he will certainly do what will be most for his own glory.

7. If it be objected to all this, (as very probably it will,) "But of what use will these creatures be in that future state? I answer this by another question, What use are they of now? If there be, (as is commonly supposed,) eight thousand species of insects, who is able to inform us of what use seven thousand of them are? If there

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6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture concerning the brute creation? What if it should then please the All-wise, the All-gracious Creator, to raise them higher in the scale of beings? What if it should please him, when he makes us *equal to angels*, to make them what we are now? Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being? If it should be so, ought our eye to be evil, because he is good? However this be, he will certainly do what will be most for his own glory.

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are four thousand species of fishes, who can tell us of what use are more than three thousand of them? If there are six hundred sorts of birds, who can tell of what use five hundred of those species are? If there be four hundred sorts of beasts, to what use do three hundred of them serve? Consider this; consider how little we know of even the present designs of God: and then you will not wonder, that we know still less of what he designs to do in the new heavens and the new earth.

8. "But what end does it answer to dwell upon this subject which we so imperfectly understand?" To consider so much as we do understand, so much as God has been pleased to reveal to us, may answer that excellent end, to illustrate that mercy of God which "is over all his works." And it may exceedingly confirm our belief, that much more he is "loving to every man." For how well may we urge our Lord's words, "Are not ye much better than they?" If then the Lord takes such care of the fowls of the air, and of the beasts of the field, shall he not much more take care of *you*, creatures of a nobler order? If "the Lord will save," as the inspired writer affirms, "both man and beast," in their several degrees, surely "the children of men may put their trust under the shadow of his wings!"

9. May it not answer another end, namely, furnish us with a full answer to a plausible objection against the justice of God, in suffering numberless creatures that had never sinned, to be so severely punished? They could not sin, for they were not moral agents. Yet how severely do they suffer! Yea, many of them, beasts of burden in particular, almost the whole time of their abode on earth. So that they can have no retribution here below. But the objection vanishes away, if we consider, that something better remains after death, for these poor creatures also; that these likewise shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings.

10. One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate him whose mercy is over all his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our hearts towards those poor creatures to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath prepared for them. Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom, into the liberty of the children of God.

11. From what has been said I cannot but draw one inference, which no man of reason can deny. If it is this which distinguishes men from beasts, that they are creatures capable of God; capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying him: then whoever is "without God in the world;" whoever does not know, or love, or enjoy

God, and is not careful about the matter, does in effect disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast. Let such vouchsafe a little attention to those remarkable words of Solomon; "I said in my heart concerning the estates of the sons of men,—they might see, that they themselves are beasts."* These sons of men are, undoubtedly, beasts; and that by their own act and deed. For they deliberately and wilfully disclaim the sole characteristic of human nature. It is true they may have a share of reason: they have speech, and they walk erect. But they have not the mark, the only mark, which totally separates man from the brute creation. "That which befalleth beasts, the same thing befalleth them." They are equally without God in the world, "so that a man" of this kind "hath no pre-eminence above a beast."

12. So much more let all those who are of a nobler turn of mind, assert the distinguishing dignity of their nature! Let all who are of a more generous spirit know and maintain their rank in the scale of beings. Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity, the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being!

"Know God, and teach your souls to know
The joys that from religion flow."

Give your hearts to him, who, together with ten thousand blessings, has "given you his Son, his only Son!" Let your continual "fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" Let God be in all your thoughts, and ye will be men indeed: let him be your God and your All! The desire of your eyes, the joy of your heart, and your portion for ever!

* Eccles. iii. 18.

SERMON LXVI.

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

"*The Mystery of Iniquity doth already work.*"—2 THESS. ii. 7.

1. WITHOUT inquiring how far these words refer to any particular event in the Christian church, I would at present take occasion from them, to consider that important question, In what manner *the mystery of iniquity* hath *wrought* among us, till it hath well-nigh covered the whole earth?

2. It is certain, that "God made man upright," perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself, and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless, state. He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," to be the Saviour of men, "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world:" the great Physician, who, by his Almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to "the image of God wherein they were created."

3. This great *mystery of godliness* began to work from the very time of the original promise. Accordingly, the Lamb being, (in the purpose of God,) "slain from the beginning of the world," from the same period his sanctifying Spirit began to renew the souls of men. We have an undeniable instance of this in Abel, who "obtained a testimony" from God "that he was righteous," Heb. xi. 4. And from that very time all that were partakers of the same faith, were partakers of the same salvation; were not only reinstated in the favour, but likewise restored to the image of God.

4. But how exceeding small was the number of these, even from the earliest ages! No sooner did "the sons of men multiply upon the face of the earth," than GOD looking down from heaven, "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth:" so great that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil, only evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 1—5. And so it remained without any intermission, till God executed that terrible sentence, "I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth." ver. 7.

5. "Only Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord," being "a just man, and perfect in his generations." Him, therefore, with his wife, his sons, and their wives, God preserved from the general destruction. And one might have imagined, that this small remnant would likewise have been "perfect in their generations." But how far was this from being the case! Presently after this signal deliverance, we find one of them, Ham, involved in sin, and under his father's curse. And how did the mystery of iniquity afterward work, not only in the posterity of Ham, but in the posterity of Japheth; yea, and of Shem, Abraham and his family only excepted!

6. Yea, how did it work even in the posterity of Abraham, in God's chosen people? Were not these also, down to Moses, to David, to Malachi, to Herod the Great, "a faithless and stubborn generation? A sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity," continually forsaking the Lord, and "provoking the Holy One of Israel?" And yet we have no reason to believe, that these were worse than the nations that surrounded them, who were universally swallowed up in all manner of wickedness, as well as in damnable idolatries, not having the God of heaven *in all their thoughts*, but working all uncleanness with greediness.

7. In the fulness of time, when iniquity of every kind, when ungodliness and unrighteousness had spread over all nations, and covered the earth as a flood: it pleased God to lift up a standard against it, by "bringing his first-begotten into the world." Now, then, one would expect the mystery of godliness would totally prevail over the mystery of iniquity: that the Son of God would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "salvation to his people Israel." All Israel, one would think, yea, and all the earth, will soon be filled with the glory of the Lord. Nay: the mystery of iniquity prevailed still, well nigh over the face of the earth. How exceeding small was the number of those whose souls were healed by the Son of God himself? "When Peter stood up in the midst of them, the number of names was about a hundred and twenty." Acts i. 15. And even these were but imperfectly healed: the chief of them being a little before so weak in faith, that though they did not, like Peter, forswear their Master, yet "they all forsook him and fled." A plain proof that the sanctifying *Spirit was not* then *given*, because *Jesus was not glorified.*

8. It was then, when he had "ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," that "the promise of the Father" was fulfilled, "which they had heard from" him. It was then he began to work like himself, showing that "all power was given to him in heaven and earth." "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and there appeared tongues as of fire, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," chap. ii. 1, &c. In consequence of this, three thousand souls received *medicine to heal their sickness*; were restored to the favour and the image of God, under one sermon of St. Peter's,

chap. ii. ver. 41. "And the Lord added to them daily," (not *such as should be saved*, a manifest perversion of the text, but) "such as were saved." The expression is peculiar; and so indeed is the position of the words, which run thus, "*And the Lord added those that were saved, daily to the church.* First, *they were saved* from the power of sin: then *they were added* to the assembly of the faithful.

9. In order clearly to see how they were already saved, we need only observe the short account of them, which is recorded in the latter part of the second, and in the fourth chapter. "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers:" that is, they were daily taught by the Apostles, and had all things common, and daily received the Lord's Supper, and attended all the public service, chap. ii. 42. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common: and sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," chap. ii. 41, 44, 45. And again, "The multitude of them that believed," now greatly increased, "were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common," chap. iv. 31, 32. And yet again, "Great grace was upon them all; neither was there any among them that lacked. For as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need," ver. 34, 35.

10. But here a question will naturally occur. How came they to act thus, to have all things in common, seeing we do not read of any positive command to do this? I answer, there needed no outward command: the command was written on their hearts. It naturally and necessarily resulted from the degree of love which they enjoyed. Observe! "They were of one heart, and of one soul: and not so much as one" (so the words run) "said," (they could not, while their hearts so overflowed with love,) "that any of the things which he possessed was his own." And wheresoever the same cause shall prevail, the same effect will naturally follow.

11. Here was the dawn of the proper Gospel-day. Here was a proper Christian church. It was now "the Sun of Righteousness" rose upon the earth, "with healing in his wings." He did now "save his people from their sins:" he "healed all their sickness." He not only taught that religion which is the true "healing of the soul," but effectually planted it in the earth; filling the souls of all that believed in him with *righteousness*, gratitude to God, and goodwill to man, attended with a *peace* that surpassed all understanding, and with *joy* unspeakable and full of glory.

12. But how soon did *the mystery of iniquity* work again and obscure the glorious prospect! It began to work, (not openly indeed, but covertly,) in two of the Christians, Ananias and Sapphira. "They sold their possession," like the rest, and probably from the same motive: but afterwards giving place to the devil, and reasoning

with flesh and blood, they "kept back part of the price." See the first Christians, that "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience!" The first that "drew back to perdition:" instead of continuing to "believe to the" final "salvation of the soul." Mark the first plague which infected the Christian church? Namely, the love of money! And will it not be the grand plague in all generations, whenever God shall revive the same work? O ye believers in Christ, take warning! Whether you are yet but *little children*, or *young men*, that *are strong* in the faith. See the snare! *Your* snare in particular! That which you will be peculiarly exposed to, after you have escaped from gross pollutions. *Love* not the world, neither the things of the world. "If any man love the world," whatever he was in time past, "the love of the Father is not" now "in him."

13. However, this plague was stayed in the first Christian church, by instantly cutting off the infected persons. By that signal judgment of God on the first offenders, "great fear came upon all," Acts v. 11, so that, for the present at least, not one dared to follow their example. Meantime *believers*, men full of faith and love, who rejoiced to have all things in common, "were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," ver. 14.

14. If we inquire in what manner the mystery of iniquity, the energy of Satan, began to work again in the Christian church, we shall find it wrought in quite a different way, putting on quite another shape. Partiality crept in among the Christian believers. Those by whom the distribution to every one was made, had respect of persons, largely supplying those of their own nation, while the other *widows*, who were not Hebrews, "were neglected in the daily administration," chap. vi. 1. Distribution was not made to them according as every one had need. Here was a manifest breach of brotherly love in the Hebrews, a sin both against justice and mercy: seeing the Grecians, as well as the Hebrews, had "sold all they had, and laid the price at the Apostles' feet." See the second plague that broke in upon the Christian church? Partiality: respect of persons; too much regard for those of our own side, and too little for others, though equally worthy.

15. The infection did not stop here, but one evil produced many more. From partiality in the Hebrews, "there arose in the Grecians a murmuring against" them: not only discontent and resentful thoughts, but words suitable thereto; unkind expressions, hard speeches, evil speaking, and backbiting, naturally followed. And by the *root of bitterness* thus *springing up*, undoubtedly *many were defiled*. The Apostles indeed soon found out the means of removing the occasion of this murmuring; yet so much of the evil root remained, that God saw it needful to use a severer remedy. He let loose the world upon them all, if haply by their sufferings, by the spoiling of their goods, by pain, imprisonment, and death itself, he might at once punish and amend them. And persecution, God's last remedy for a backsliding people, had the happy effect for which he intended it. Both the partiality of the Hebrews ceased, and the

murmuring of the Grecians. And "then had the churches rest: and were edified," built up in the love of God and one another. "And walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Acts ix. 31.

16. It seems to have been some time after this that the mystery of iniquity began to work in the form of *zeal*. Great troubles arose by means of some who zealously contended for circumcision and the rest of the ceremonial law, till the Apostles and elders put an end to the spreading evil, by that final determination, "It seemeth good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things, that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication," chap. xv. 28, 29. Yet was not this evil so thoroughly suppressed, but that it frequently broke out again, as we learn from various parts of St. Paul's Epistles, particularly that to the Galatians.

17. Nearly allied to this was another grievous evil, which at the same time sprang up in the church; want of mutual forbearance, and, of consequence, anger, strife, contention, variance. One very remarkable instance of this we find in this very chapter. When "Paul said to Barnabas, Let us visit the brethren where we have preached the word, Barnabas determined to take with him John," because he was "his sister's son." "But Paul thought it not good to take him who had deserted them before." And he had certainly reason on his side. But Barnabas resolved to have his own way. Και εγενετο παροξυσμος, *and there was a fit of anger.* It does not say, on St. Paul's side. Barnabas only had passion, to supply the want of reason. Accordingly he departed from the work, and went home, while St. Paul *went* forward "through Syria and Silicia, confirming the churches," ver. 41.

18. The very first society of Christians at Rome were not altogether free from this evil leaven. There were *divisions and offences* among them also, chap. xvi. 17, although, in general, they seem to have *walked in love.* But how early did the mystery of iniquity work, and how powerfully in the church at Corinth? Not only *schisms* and *heresies*, animosities, fierce and bitter contentions were among them, but open, actual sins; yea, "such fornication as was not named among the heathens," 1 Cor. v. 1. Nay, there was need to remind them that "neither adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards," could "enter into the kingdom of heaven," chap. vi. 9, 10. And in all St. Paul's Epistles we meet with abundant proof, that tares grew up with the wheat in all the churches; and that the mystery of iniquity did every where, in a thousand forms, counterwork the mystery of godliness.

19. When St. James wrote his Epistle, directed more immediately "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad," to the converted Jews, the tares sown among this wheat had produced a plentiful harvest. That grand pest of Christianity, a faith without works, was spread far and wide, filling the church with a wisdom from beneath, which was *earthly, sensual, devilish;* and which gave rise, not only to rash judging and evil-speaking, but to *envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work.*

Indeed, whoever peruses the fourth and fifth chapters of this epistle with serious attention, will be inclined to believe, that even in this early period, the tares had nigh choked the wheat: and that among most of those to whom St. James wrote, no more than the form of godliness, if so much, was left.

20. St. Peter wrote about the same time, "to the strangers," the Christians, "scattered abroad through" all those spacious provinces of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia (Minor,) and Bithynia." These probably were some of the most eminent Christians that were then in the world. Yet how exceeding far were even these, from being "without spot and blemish!" And what grievous tares were here also growing up with the wheat? Some of them were "bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them:" 2 Pet. ii. 1, &c. And "many followed their pernicious ways," of whom the Apostle gives that terrible character, "They walk after the flesh," in "the lust of uncleanness, like brute beasts: made to be taken and destroyed. Spots they are and blemishes, while they feast with you," (in the *feasts of charity*, then celebrated throughout the whole church.) "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, for whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." And yet these very men were called Christians. And were even then in the bosom of the church! Nor does the Apostle mention them as infesting any one particular church only; but as a general plague, which even then was dispersed far and wide among all the Christians to whom he wrote.

21. Such is the authentic account of the mystery of iniquity, working even in the apostolic churches! An account given, not by the Jews or heathens, but by the Apostles themselves. To this we may add the account which is given by the Head and Founder of the church: Him "who holds the stars in his right hand," who is "the faithful and true Witness." We may easily infer what was the state of the church in general, from the state of the seven churches in Asia. One of these indeed, the church of Philadelphia, had "kept his word, and had not denied his name;" Rev. iii. 8. The church of Smyrna was likewise in a flourishing state: but all the rest were corrupted more or less. Insomuch that many of them were not a jot better than the present race of Christians: and our Lord then threatened, what he has long since performed, to "remove the candlestick" from them.

22. Such was the real state of the Christian church, even during the first century. While not only St. John, but most of the Apostles were present with, and presided over it. But what a mystery is this! That the All-wise, the All-gracious, the Almighty, should suffer it so to be! Not in one only, but, as far as we can learn, in every Christian society, those of Smyrna and Philadelphia excepted? And how came these to be excepted? Why were these less corrupted, (to go no farther) than the other churches of Asia? It seems because they were less wealthy. The Christians in Philadelphia were

not literally "increased in goods," like those in Ephesus or Laodicea: and if the Christians at Smyrna had acquired more wealth, it was swept away by persecution. So that these having less of this world's goods, retained more of the simplicity and purity of the gospel.

23. But how contrary is this scriptural account of the ancient Christians, to the ordinary apprehensions of men! We have been apt to imagine, that the primitive church was all excellence and perfection! Answerable to that strong description which St. Peter cites from Moses: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." And such, without all doubt, the first Christian church, which commenced at the day of Pentecost, was. But how soon did the fine gold become dim! How soon was the wine mixed with water! How little time elapsed, before the god of this world so far regained his empire, that Christians, in general, were scarcely distinguishable from heathens, save by their opinions and modes of worship!

24. And if the state of the church in the very first century was so bad, we cannot suppose it was any better in the second. Undoubtedly it grew worse and worse. Tertullian, one of the most eminent Christians of that age, has given us an account of it in various parts of his writings: whence we learn, that real, internal religion was hardly found: nay, that not only the *tempers* of the Christians were exactly the same with those of their heathen neighbours, (pride, passion, love of the world reigning alike in both,) but their lives and manners also. The bearing a faithful testimony against the general corruption of Christians, seems to have raised the outcry against Montanus; and against Tertullian himself, when he was convinced that the testimony of Montanus was true. As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I believe his grand heresy was, the maintaining that *without* inward and outward *holiness, no man shall see the Lord.*

25. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in every respect an unexceptionable witness, who flourished about the middle of the third century, has left us abundance of letters, in which he gives a large and particular account of the state of religion in his time. In reading this, one would be apt to imagine, he was reading an account of the present century: so totally void of true religion were the generality both of the laity and clergy: so immersed in ambition, envy, covetousness, luxury, and all other vices, that the Christians of Africa were then exactly the same as the Christians of England are now.

26. It is true, that during this whole period, during the first three centuries, there were intermixed longer or shorter seasons, wherein true Christianity revived. In those seasons the justice and mercy of God let loose the heathens upon the Christians. Many of these were then called to resist unto blood. And the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. The Apostolic Spirit returned: and many "counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy." Many others were reduced to a happy poverty: and being stript of what they had loved too well, they "re-

membered from whence they were fallen, and repented, and did their first works."

27. Persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power, upon the Christians, more especially upon the clergy. Then was fulfilled in the Christian church what Sallust says of the people of Rome: *Sublata imperii amula, non sensim sed præcipiti cursu, a virtutibus descitum, ad vitia transcursum.* Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed, and wealth and honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians did not gradually sink, but rushed headlong into all manner of vices. Then the mystery of iniquity was no more hid, but stalked abroad in the face of the sun. Then, not the golden, but the iron age of the church commenced: then one might truly say,

> —Protinus irrupit venæ pejoris in ævum
> Omne nefas; fugere pudor, verumque, fidesque,
> In quorum subiere locum fraudesque dolique,
> Insidiæque, et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi.
>
> At once, in that unhappy age, broke in
> All wickedness, and every deadly sin:
> Truth, modesty, and love, fled far away,
> And force, and thirst of gold, claim'd universal sway.

28. And this is the event which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph! Yea, which some of them suppose to be typified in the Revelation, by "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven!" Rather say, it was the coming of Satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit: seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian, as well as the Pagan world, with hardly any control. Historians, indeed, tell us very gravely, of nations in every century, who were by such and such, (*saints* without doubt!) converted to Christianity. But still these converts practised all kind of abominations, exactly as they did before: no way differing, either in their tempers or in their lives, from the nations that were still called heathens. Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church, from the time of Constantine till the Reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city, (according to the scriptural model,) was no where to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.

29. Has the case been altered since the Reformation? Does the mystery of iniquity no longer work in the Church? No! The Reformation itself has not extended to above one third of the Western Church: so that two thirds of this remain as they were: so do the Eastern, Southern, and Northern Churches. They are as full of

heathenish, or worse than heathenish abominations as ever they were before. And what is the condition of the Reformed Churches? It is certain that they were reformed in their opinions, as well as their modes of worship. But is not this all? Were either their tempers or lives reformed? Not at all. Indeed, many of the Reformers themselves complained, that "The Reformation was not carried far enough." But what did they mean? Why, that they did not sufficiently reform the *rites* and *ceremonies* of the church. Ye fools and blind! To fix your whole attention on the circumstantials of religion! Your complaint ought to have been, the Essentials of Religion were not carried far enough. You ought vehemently to have insisted on an entire change of men's *tempers* and *lives:* on their showing they had "the mind that was in Christ," by "walking as he also walked." Without this, how exquisitely trifling was the Reformation of opinions, and rites, and ceremonies? Now, let any one survey the state of Christianity in the reformed parts of Switzerland. In Germany, or France. In Sweden, Denmark, Holland. In Great-Britain and Ireland. How little are any of these reformed Christians better than heathen nations! Have they more, (I will not say communion with God, although there is no Christianity without it,) but have they more justice, mercy, or truth, than the inhabitants of China, or Indostan? O no! we must acknowledge with sorrow and shame, that we are far beneath them!

> That we, who by thy name are nam'd,
> The heathens unbaptiz'd out-sin!

30. Is not this the *falling away* or *apostacy* from God, foretold by St. Paul in his second Epistle to the Thessalonians? chap. ii. ver. 3. Indeed, I would not dare to say, with George Fox, that this apostacy was universal: that there never were any real Christians in the world, from the days of the Apostles till his time. But we may boldly say, that wherever Christianity has spread, the Apostacy has spread also. Insomuch that, although there are now, and always have been individuals, who were real Christians, yet the whole world never did, nor can at this day, show a Christian country or city.

31. I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostacy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for "the healing of the nations;" for the saving from sin by means of the Second Adam, all that were *constituted sinners* by the first. But it does not answer this end: it never did, unless for a short time at Jerusalem. What can we say, but that if it *have not yet*, it surely *will* answer it. The time is coming, when not only "all Israel shall be saved, but the fulness of the Gentiles will come in." The time cometh, when "violence shall no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;" but every city shall call her

"walls salvation, and her gates praise:" when the people, saith the Lord, "shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified," Isaiah lx. 18. 21.

32. From the preceding considerations, we may learn the full answer to one of the grand objections of infidels against Christianity, namely, *The lives of Christians.* Of Christians, do you say? I doubt whether you ever knew a *Christian* in your life. When Tomo Chachi, the Indian Chief, keenly replied to those who spoke to him of being a Christian, "Why there are Christians at Savannah! There are Christians at Frederica!" The proper answer was, "No, they are not, they are no more Christians than you and Sinauky." "But are not these Christians in Canterbury, in London, in Westminster?" No, no more than they are angels. None are Christians, but they that have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he walked. "Why, if these only are Christians," said an eminent wit, "I never saw a Christian yet." I believe it: you never did. And perhaps, you never will. For you will never find them in the grand or the gay world. The few Christians that are upon the earth, are only to be found where *you* never look for them. Never, therefore, urge this objection more: never object to Christianity the lives or tempers of heathens. Though they are *called* Christians, the name does not imply the thing: they are as far from this as hell from heaven.

33. We may learn from hence, Secondly, the extent of the fall; the astonishing spread of original corruption. What, among so many thousands, so many millions, is there none righteous, no, not one? Not by nature. But including the grace of God, I will not say with the heathen poet,

> Rari quippe boni, numero vix totidem quot
> Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nili.

As if he had allowed too much in supposing there were a hundred good men in the Roman empire, he comes to himself, and affirms there are hardly seven. Nay, surely there were seven thousand! There were so many long ago in one small nation, where Elijah supposed there were none at all. But allowing a few exceptions, we are authorized to say, "The whole world lieth in wickedness:" yea, *in the wicked One*, (as the words properly signify.) "Yes, the whole heathen world." Yea, and the Christian too, (so called.) For where is the difference, save in a few externals! See with your eyes. Look into that large country, Indostan. There are Christians and heathens too. Which have more justice, mercy, and truth? The Christians or the heathens? Which are most corrupt, infernal, devilish, in their tempers and practice? The English or the Indians? Which have desolated whole countries, and clogged the rivers with dead bodies?

> O sacred name of Christian! how profaned!

O earth, earth, earth! how dost thou groan under the villanies of thy *Christian* inhabitants!

34. From many of the preceding circumstances we may learn, Thirdly, what is the genuine tendency of riches: what a baleful influence they have had in all ages, upon pure and undefiled religion. Not that money is an evil of itself: it is applicable to good as well as bad purposes. But, nevertheless, it is an undoubted truth, that the "love of money is the root of all evil:" and also that the possession of riches naturally breeds the love of them. Accordingly, it is an old remark,

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit:

"As money increases, so does the love of it," and always will, without a miracle of grace. Although, therefore, other causes may concur, yet this has been in all ages the principal cause of the decay of true religion in every Christian community. As long as the Christians in any place were poor, they were devoted to God. While they had little of the world they did not love the world: but the more they had of it, the more they loved it. This constrained the Lover of their souls, at various times, to unchain their persecutors, who, by reducing them to their former poverty, reduced them to their former purity. But still remember, riches have, in all ages, been the bane of genuine Christianity.

35. We may learn hence, Fourthly, how great watchfulness they need who desire to be real Christians, considering what a state the world is in! May not each of them well say,

"Into a world of ruffians sent,
I walk on hostile ground:
Wild, human bears on slaughter bent,
And rav'ning wolves surround."

They are the more dangerous, because they commonly appear in sheep's clothing. Even those who do not pretend to religion, yet make fair professions of good will, of readiness to serve us, and, perhaps, of truth and honesty. But beware of taking their word. Trust not any man until he fears God. It is a great truth,

"He that fears no God, can love no friend!"

Therefore stand upon your guard against every one that is not earnestly seeking to save his soul. We have need to keep both our heart and mouth as "with a bridle, while the ungodly are in our sight." Their conversation, their spirit, is infectious, and steals upon us unawares, we know not how. "Happy is the man that feareth always" in this sense also, lest he should partake of other men's sins! "O keep thyself pure!" "Watch and pray, that thou enter not into temptation!"

36. We may learn from hence, Lastly, what thankfulness becomes

those who have escaped the corruption that is in the world, whom God hath chosen out of the world, to be holy and unblameable. "Who is it that maketh thee to differ?" "And what hast thou which thou hast not received?" Is it not "God [alone] who worketh in thee both to will and to do of his good pleasure?" "And let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy." Let us praise him, that he hath given us to see the deplorable state of all that are round about us: to see the wickedness which overflows the earth, and yet not be borne away by the torrent! We see the general, the almost universal contagion; and yet it cannot approach to hurt us! Thanks be unto Him "who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth still deliver!" And have we not farther ground for thankfulness, yea, and strong consolation, in the blessed hope which God hath given us, that the time is at hand, when righteousness shall be as universal as unrighteousness is now? Allowing that "the whole creation now groaneth together," under the sin of man; our comfort is, it will not always groan: God will arise and maintain his own cause. And the whole creation shall then be delivered both from moral and natural corruption. Sin, and its consequence, pain, shall be no more: holiness and happiness will cover the earth. Then shall all the ends of the world see the salvation of our God. And the whole race of mankind shall know, and love, and serve God, and reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON LXVII.

THE END OF CHRIST'S COMING.

"*For this purpose was the* SON *of* GOD *manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*"—1 JOHN iii. 8.

MANY eminent writers, heathen as well as Christian, both in earlier and later ages, have employed their utmost labour and art, in painting the beauty of virtue. And the same pains they have taken to describe, in the liveliest colours, the deformity of vice; both of vice in general, and of those particular vices which were most prevalent in their respective ages and countries. With equal care they have placed, in a strong light, the happiness that attends virtue, and the misery which usually accompanies vice, and always follows it. And it may be acknowledged, that treatises of this kind are not wholly without their use. Probably, hereby, some, on the one hand, have been stirred up to desire and follow after virtue, and

some, on the other hand, checked in their career of vice; perhaps reclaimed from it, at least for a season. But the change effected in men by these means, is seldom either deep or universal. Much less is it durable: in a little space, it vanishes away as the morning cloud. Such motives are far too feeble to overcome the numberless temptations that surround us. All that can be said of the beauty and advantage of virtue, and the deformity and ill effects of vice, cannot resist, and much less overcome and heal, one irregular appetite or passion.

> "All these fences, and their whole array,
> One cunning bosom sin sweeps quite away."

2. There is, therefore, an absolute necessity, if ever we would conquer vice, or steadily persevere in the practice of virtue, to have arms of a better kind than these, otherwise we may *see* what is right; but we cannot attain it. Many of the men of reflection among the very heathens were deeply sensible of this. The language of their heart was that of Medea:—

> ———*Video meliora, proboque;*
> *Deteriora sequor:*

How exactly agreeing with the words of the Apostle, (personating a man convinced of sin, but not yet conquering it) "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do." The impotence of the human mind, even the Roman philosopher could discover: "There is in every man," says he, "this weakness;" (he might have said, this sore disease,) "Gloriæ sitis: thirst for glory. Nature points out the disease; but nature shows us no remedy."

3. Nor is it strange, that though they sought for a remedy, yet they found none. For they sought it, where it never was, and never will be found, namely, in themselves, in reason, in philosophy:—broken reeds:—bubbles:—smoke! They did not seek it in God, in whom alone it is possible to find it. In God! No; they totally disclaim this: and that in the strongest terms. For although Cicero, one of their oracles, once stumbled upon that strange truth, "Nemo unquam vir magnus sine afflatu divino fuit;" (there never was any great man, who was not divinely inspired.) Yet in the very same tract he contradicts himself, and totally overthrows his own assertion, by asking, "Quis pro virtute aut sapientiâ gratias dedit Deis unquam?" Who ever returned thanks to God for his virtue or wisdom? The Roman poet is, if possible, more express still: who, after mentioning several outward blessings, honestly adds,

> *Hæc satis est orare Jovem, quæ donat et aufert:*
> *Det vitam, det opes: Æquum mi animum ipse parabo.*
>
> We ask of God, what he can give or take:
> Life, wealth: but virtuous I myself will make.

1. The best of them either sought virtue partly from God, and

partly from themselves; or sought it from those gods who were, indeed, but devils, and so not likely to make their votaries better than themselves. So dim was the light of the wisest of men, till "life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel;" till "the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil."

But what are "the works of the devil" here mentioned? How was "the Son of God manifested" to destroy them? And how, in what manner, and by what steps, does he actually destroy them? These three very important points we may consider in their order.

I. And first, what these works of the devil are, we learn from the words preceding and following the text: "We know that he was manifested to take away our sins," ver. 5. "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, seeth him not, neither knoweth him," ver. 6. "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," ver. 8. "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin," ver. 9. From the whole of this it appears, that "the works of the devil," here spoken of, are sin and the fruits of sin.

2. But since the wisdom of God has now dissipated the clouds which so long covered the earth, and put an end to the childish conjectures of men, concerning these things, it may be of use to take a more distinct view of these "works of the devil," so far as the oracles of God instruct us. It is true, the design of the Holy Spirit was to assist our faith, not gratify our curiosity. And, therefore, the account he has given in the first chapters of Genesis, is exceeding short. Nevertheless, it is so clear, that we may learn therefrom whatsoever it concerns us to know.

3. To take the matter from the beginning: "The Lord God," (literally JEHOVAH, the GODS; that is, One and Three,) "created man in his own image:" in his own natural image, (as to his better part,) that is, a spirit, as God is a spirit: endued with *understanding*, which, if not the essence, seems to be the most essential property of a spirit. And probably the human spirit, like the angelical, then discerned truth by intuition. Hence he named every creature as soon as he saw it, according to its inmost nature. Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature: ignorance, therefore, was inseparable from him; but error was not: it does not appear that he was mistaken in any thing. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it.

4. He was endued also with a *will*, with various affections, (which are only the will exerting itself various ways,) that he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good; otherwise his understanding had been to no purpose. He was likewise endued with *liberty*, a power of choosing what was good, and refusing what was not so. Without this, both the will and the understanding would have been utterly useless. Indeed, without liberty, man had been so far from being a *free agent*, that he could have been no *agent* at all. For every *unfree being* is purely passive, not active in any degree. Have

you a sword in your hand? Does a man, stronger than you, seize your hand, and force you to wound a third person? In this you are no agent, any more than the sword: the hand is as passive as the steel. So in every possible case. He that is not free is not an *agent*, but a *patient*.

5. It seems, therefore, that every spirit in the universe, as such, is endued with *understanding*, and, in consequence, with a *will*, and with a measure of *liberty*: and that these three are inseparably united in every intelligent nature. And observe: *liberty necessitated*, or over-ruled, is really no liberty at all. It is a contradiction in terms. It is the same as *unfree freedom*: that is, downright nonsense.

6. It may be farther observed, (and it is an important observation,) that where there is no liberty, there can be no moral good or evil, no virtue or vice. The fire warms us, yet it is not capable of virtue; it burns us; yet this is no vice. There is no virtue, but where an intelligent being knows, loves, and chooses what is good: nor is there any vice, but where such a being knows, loves, and chooses what is evil.

7. And God created man, not only in his *natural*, but likewise in his own *moral* image. He created him not only *in knowledge*, but also in righteousness and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind, so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free-agent, he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing, he was unspeakably happy, dwelling in God, and God in him, having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit; and the continual testimony of his conscience, that all his ways were good and acceptable to God.

8. Yet his liberty, (as was observed before,) necessarily included a power of choosing or refusing either good or evil. Indeed it has been doubted, whether man could then choose evil, knowing it to be such. But it cannot be doubted, he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore not impeachable. And this unravels the whole mystery of the grand question, "Unde Malum?" "How came evil into the world?" It came from "Lucifer, Son of the Morning:" it was the *work of the devil*. "For the devil, (saith the Apostle,) sinneth from the beginning;" that is, was the first sinner in the universe: the author of sin: the first being, who, by the abuse of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation. He,

> "Of the first,
> If not the first Archangel,"

was self-tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation, and gave way, first to pride, then to self-will. He said, "I will sit upon the sides of the North: I will be like the Most High." He did not fall alone: but soon drew after him a third part of the stars of heaven: in consequence of which they lost their glory and happiness, and were driven from their former habitation.

9. "Having great wrath," and perhaps envy at the happiness of the creatures whom God had newly created, it is not strange, that he should desire and endeavour to deprive them of it. In order to this, he concealed himself in the serpent, who was *the most subtle*, or intelligent, of all the brute creatures, and, on that account, the least liable to raise suspicion. Indeed some have, (not improbably,) supposed, that the serpent was then endued with reason and speech. Had not Eve known he was so, would she have admitted any parley with him? Would she not have been frightened rather than deceived? (as the Apostle observes she was.) To deceive her, Satan mingled truth with falsehood: "Hath God said, Ye may not eat of every tree of the garden?" And soon after persuaded her to disbelieve God, to suppose his threatening should not be fulfilled. She then lay open to the whole temptation; to "the desire of the flesh," for the tree was "good for food;" to "the desire of the eyes," for it was "pleasant to the eyes;" and to "the pride of life," for it was "to be desired to make one wise," and consequently honoured. So unbelief begot pride. She thought herself wiser than God; capable of finding a better way to happiness than God had taught her. It begot self-will: she was determined to do her own will, not the will of him that made her. It begot foolish desires, and completed all by outward sin: "she took of the fruit, and did eat."

10 She then "gave to her husband, and he did eat." And *in that day*, yea, that moment, he *died!* The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy: he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him now as an angry judge, "he was afraid." But how was his understanding darkened, to think he could "hide himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden?" Thus was his soul utterly dead to God! And in that day his body likewise began to die; became obnoxious to weakness, sickness, pain: all preparatory to the death of the body, which naturally led to eternal death.

II. Such are "the works of the devil," sin and its fruits, considered in their order and connexion. We are, in the second place, to consider, How "the Son of God was manifested," in order to "destroy them."

1. He was manifested as the only begotten Son of God, in glory equal with the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven, before and at the foundation of the world. These "morning stars sang together," all these "sons of God shouted for joy," when they heard him pronounce, "Let there be light; and there was light;" when he "spread the north over the empty space, and stretched out the heavens as a curtain." Indeed it was the universal belief of the ancient church, that God the Father none hath seen, nor can see: that from all eternity, he hath dwelt in light unapproachable; and it is only in and by the Son of his Love, that he hath, at any time, revealed himself to his creatures.

2. How the Son of God was manifested to our first parents in Paradise, it is not easy to determine. It is generally, and not improbably, supposed, that he appeared to them in the form of a man, and conversed with them face to face. Not that I can at all believe the ingenious dream of Dr. Watts, concerning "the glorious humanity of Christ," which he supposes to have existed before the world began, and to have been endued with, I know not what astonishing powers. Nay, I look upon this to be an exceeding dangerous, yea, mischievous hypothesis; as it quite excludes the force of very many scriptures, which have been hitherto thought to prove the Godhead of the Son. And I am afraid it was the grand means of turning that great man aside from the faith once delivered to the saints; that is, if he was turned aside, if that beautiful soliloquy be genuine, which is printed among his posthumous works, wherein he so earnestly beseeches the Son of God not to be displeased, "because he cannot believe him to be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father."

3. May we not reasonably believe it was by similar appearances that He was manifested in succeeding ages, to Enoch, while he "walked with God;" to Noah, before and after the deluge; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on various occasions; and, to mention no more, to Moses. This seems to be the natural meaning of the word; "My servant Moses is faithful in all my house.—With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Jehovah shall he behold," namely, the Son of God.

4. But all these were only types of his grand manifestation. It was in the fulness of time (in just the middle age of the world, as a great man largely proves,) that God "brought his first begotten into the world, made of a woman," by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. He was afterwards manifested to the shepherds; to devout Simeon; to Anna the prophetess; and to "all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem."

5. When he was of due age for executing his priestly office, he was manifested to Israel, "preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, in every town, and in every city." And for a time he was glorified by all, who acknowledged, that he "spake as never man spake;" "that he spake as one having authority," with all the wisdom of God, and the power of God. He was manifested by numberless "signs and wonders, and mighty works which he did:" as well as by his whole life, being the only one born of a woman, "who knew no sin," who, from his birth to his death, "did all things well," doing continually, "not his own will, but the will of him that sent him."

6. After all, "behold the Lamb of God, taking away the sin of the world!" This was a more glorious manifestation of himself, than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he manifested to angels and to men, when he "was wounded for our transgressions," when he "bore all our sins in his own body on the

tree:" when having, by that one oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, he cried out, "It is finished; and bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." We need but just mention those farther manifestations, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, into the glory which he had before the world began; and his pouring out the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost: both of which are beautifully described in those well-known words of the Psalmist, "He hath ascended up on high; he hath led captivity captive; he hath received gifts for men: yea, even for his enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among, [or in] them."

7. "That the Lord God might dwell in them." This refers to a yet farther manifestation of the Son of God, even his inward manifestation of himself. When he spoke of this to his Apostles, but a little before his death, one of them immediately asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" By enabling us to believe in his name. For he is then inwardly manifested to us, when we are enabled to say with confidence, "My Lord, and my God!" Then each of us can boldly say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And it is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts, that he effectually "destroys the works of the devil."

III. 1. How he does this, in what manner, and by what steps he does actually destroy them, we are now to consider. And, first, as Satan began his first work in Eve, by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man, by enabling us to believe in him. He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our understanding. Out of darkness he commands light to shine, and takes away the veil which the god of this world had spread over our hearts. And we then see, not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses," not imputing them to us. In that day "we know that we are of God," children of God by faith, "having redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ:" that peace which enables us in every state, therewith to be content; which delivers us from all perplexing doubts, from all tormenting fears: and, in particular, from that "fear of death, whereby we were, all our lifetime, subject to bondage."

2. At the same time, the Son of God strikes at the root of that grand work of the devil, pride: causing the sinner to humble himself before the Lord, to abhor himself, as it were, in dust and ashes. He strikes at the root of self-will, enabling the humbled sinner to say in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." He destroys the love of the world, delivering them that believe in him from "every foolish and hurtful desire;" from "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." He saves them from seeking, or expecting to find happiness in any creature. As Satan

turned the heart of man, from the Creator to the creature; so the Son of God turns his heart back again, from the creature to the Creator. Thus it is, by manifesting himself, he destroys the works of the devil, restoring the guilty outcast from God, to his favour, to pardon and peace; the sinner, in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holiness; the burdened, miserable sinner, to joy unspeakable, to real substantial happiness.

3. But it may be observed, that the Son of God does not actually destroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood. He does not destroy all that weakness of understanding which is the natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in a corruptible body; so that still,

Humanum est errare et nescire:

Both ignorance and error belong to humanity. He intrusts us with only an exceeding small share of knowledge in our present state, lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods. It is to remove from us all temptation to pride, and all thought of independency, (which is the very thing that men, in general, so earnestly covet, under the name of *liberty*,) that he leaves us encompassed with all these infirmities, particularly, weakness of understanding, till the sentence takes place, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

4. Then error, pain, and all bodily infirmities cease: all these are destroyed by death. And death itself, "the last enemy" of man, shall be destroyed at the resurrection. The moment that we hear the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God, "then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. This corruptible [body] shall put on incorruption; this mortal [body] shall put on immortality;" and the Son of God manifested in the clouds of heaven, shall destroy this last work of the devil.

5. Here, then, we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: a restoration of man, by him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of: a restoration, not only to the favour, but likewise to the image of God: implying, not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God. It is plain, if we attend to the preceding considerations, that nothing short of this is Christian religion. Every thing else, whether negative or external, is utterly wide of the mark. But what a paradox is this! How little is it understood in the Christian world! yea, in this enlightened age, wherein, it is taken for granted, the world is wiser than ever it was from the beginning. Among all our discoveries, who has discovered this? How few, either among the learned or unlearned! And yet, if we believe the Bible, who can deny it? Who can doubt of it? It runs through the Bible from the begin-

ning to the end, in one connected chain. And the agreement of every part of it, with every other, is, properly, the analogy of faith. Beware of taking any thing else, or any thing less than this for religion. Not any thing else; do not imagine an outward form, a round of duties, both in public and private, is religion. Do not suppose, that honesty, justice, and whatever is called *morality*, (though excellent in its place,) is religion. And least of all dream that orthodoxy, right opinion, vulgarly called *faith*,) is religion. Of all religious dreams, this is the most vain, which takes hay and stubble, for gold tried in the fire!

6. O do not take any thing less than this, for the religion of Jesus Christ! Do not take a part of it for the whole! What God hath joined together, put not assunder! Take no less for his religion, than the "faith that worketh by love," all inward and outward holiness. Be not content with any religion which does not imply the destruction of all the works of the devil, that is, of all sin. We know weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities will remain, while this corruptible body remains. But sin need not remain: this is that work of the devil, eminently so called, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy in this present life. He is able, he is willing to destroy it now, in all that believe in him. Only be not straitened in your own bowels! Do not distrust his power or his love! Put his promise to the proof! He hath spoken: and is he not ready, likewise, to perform? Only "come boldly to the throne of grace," trusting in his mercy: and you shall find, "He saveth to the uttermost all those that come to God through him!"

SERMON LXVIII.

THE GENERAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

"*The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*"—ISAIAH xi. 9.

1. IN what a condition is the world at present! How does darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it, cover the face of the earth! From the accurate inquiry, made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. Brerewood, (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form the more exact judgment,) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are pro-

fessed heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ, as if he had never come into the world. Six of the remaining parts are professed Mahometans; so that only five in thirty are so much as nominally Christians!

2. And, let it be remembered, that since this computation was made, many new nations have been discovered: numberless islands, particularly in the South Sea, large and well inhabited. But by whom! By heathens of the basest sort; many of them inferior to the beasts of the field. Whether they eat men or not, (which indeed I cannot find any sufficient ground to believe,) they certainly kill all that fall into their hands. They are, therefore, more savage than lions, who kill no more creatures than are necessary to satisfy their present hunger. See the real dignity of human nature! Here it appears in its genuine purity: not polluted either by those "general corrupters, kings," or by the least tincture of religion! What will Abbé Raynal, (that determined enemy to monarchy and revelation,) say to this?

3 A little, and but a little, above the heathens in religion, are the Mahometans. But how far and wide has this miserable delusion spread over the face of the earth! Insomuch that the Mahometans are considerably more in number, (as six to five,) than Christians. And by all the accounts which have any pretence to authenticity, these are also, in general, as utter strangers to all true religion as their four-footed brethren. As void of mercy as lions and tigers; as much given up to brutal lusts as bulls or goats: so that they are in truth a disgrace to human nature, and a plague to all that are under the iron yoke.

4. It is true, a celebrated writer (Lady Mary Wortley Montague) gives a very different character of them. With the finest flow of words, in the most elegant language, she labours to wash the Æthiop white. She represents them as many degrees above the Christians, as some of the most amiable people in the world, as possessed of all the social virtues, as some of the most accomplished of men. But I can in nowise receive her report: I cannot rely upon her authority. I believe those round about her had just as much religion as their admirer had, when she was admitted into the interior parts of the Grand Seignior's seraglio. Notwithstanding, therefore, all that such a witness does or can say in their favour, I believe the Turks in general are little, if at all, better than the generality of the heathens.

5. And little, if at all, better than the Turks, are the Christians in the Turkish dominions; even the best of them; those that live in the Morea, or are scattered up and down in Asia. The more numerous bodies of Georgian, Circassian, Mengrelian Christians, are a proverb of reproach to the Turks themselves: not only for their deplorable ignorance, but for their total, stupid, barbarous irreligion.

6. From the most authentic accounts we can obtain of the Southern Christians, those in Abyssinia, and of the Northern Churches, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow, we

have reason to fear they are much in the same condition, both with regard to knowledge and religion, as those in Turkey. Or if those in Abyssinia are more civilized, and have a larger share of knowledge, yet they do not appear to have any more religion than either the Mahometans or Pagans.

7. The Western Churches seem to have the pre-eminence over all these in many respects. They have abundantly more knowledge: they have more scriptural and more rational modes of worship. Yet two-thirds of them are still involved in the corruptions of the Church of Rome: and most of these are entirely unacquainted with either the theory or practice of religion. And as to those who are called Protestants or Reformed, what acquaintance with it have they? Put Papists and Protestants, French and English together, the bulk of one, and of the other nation: and what manner of Christians are they? Are they "holy as He that hath called them is holy?" Are they "filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Is there "that mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus? And do they "walk as Christ also walked?" Nay, they are as far from it as hell is from heaven.

8. Such is the present state of mankind in all parts of the world! But how astonishing is this, if there is a God in heaven; and if his eyes are over all the earth; can he despise the work of his own hand? Surely this is one of the greatest mysteries under heaven! How is it possible to reconcile this with either the wisdom or goodness of God? And what can give ease to a thoughtful mind under so melancholy a prospect? What but the consideration, that things will not always be so; that another scene will soon be opened. God will be jealous of his honour: he will arise and maintain his own cause. He will judge the prince of this world, and spoil him of his usurped dominion. He will *give* his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth, shall fill every soul of man.

9. "Impossible," will some men say, "yea, the greatest of all impossibilities! That we should see a Christian world! Yea, a Christian nation, or city! How can these things be?" On one supposition, indeed, not only all impossibility, but all difficulty vanishes away. Only suppose the Almighty to act *irresistibly*, and the thing is done: yea, with just the same ease as when "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." But then, man would be man no longer: his inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent any more than the sun or the wind, as he would no longer be endued with liberty, a power of choosing, or self-determination. Consequently, he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or punishment.

10. But setting aside this clumsy way of cutting the knot, which we are not able to untie: how can all men be made holy and happy.

while they continue men? While they still enjoy both the understanding, the affections, and the liberty, which are essential to a moral agent? There seems to be a plain simple way of removing this difficulty, without entangling ourselves in any subtle, metaphysical disquisitions. As God is One, so the work of God is uniform in all ages. May we not then conceive, how he *will* work on the souls of men in times to come, by considering how he *does* work *now?* And how he *has* wrought in times past?

11. Take one instance of this, and such an instance as you cannot easily be deceived in. You know how God wrought in *your own* soul, when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He did not take away your understanding, but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections: rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty, your power of choosing good or evil: he did not *force* you: but, being *assisted* by his grace, you, like Mary, *chose* the better part. Just so has he *assisted* five in one house to make that happy *choice:* fifty or five hundred in one city, and many thousands in a nation, without depriving any of them of that liberty which is essential to a moral agent.

12. Not that I deny that there are exempt cases wherein

"The o'erwhelming power of saving grace"

does, for a time, work as irresistibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I speak of God's general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable instances; perhaps more within fifty years last past, than any one in England or in Europe. And with regard even to these exempt cases: although God does work irresistibly *for the time*, yet I do not believe there is any human soul, in which God works irresistibly *at all times*. Nay, I am fully persuaded there is not. I am persuaded, there are no men living that have not many times "resisted the Holy Ghost," and "made void the counsel of God against themselves." Yea, I am persuaded, every child of God has had at some time "life and death set before him," eternal life and eternal death, and has in himself the casting voice. So true is that well-known saying of St. Austin, (one of the noblest he ever uttered,) *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis:* he that made us *without ourselves*, will not save us *without ourselves*. Now in the same manner as God *has* converted so many to himself, without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations or the whole world. And it is as easy to him to convert a world as one individual soul.

13. Let us observe what God has done already. Between fifty and sixty years ago, God raised up a few young men in the University of Oxford, to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to.

That without holiness no man shall see the Lord:

That this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do:

That he doeth it of his own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ:

That this holiness is the mind that was in Christ, enabling us to walk as he also walked:

That no man can be thus sanctified till he be justified: and

That we are justified by faith alone. These great truths they declared on all occasions in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.

14. From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more "found redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins." They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into North Britain and Ireland, and a few years after, into New-York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland, and Nova Scotia. So that, although at first this "grain of mustard seed" was "the least of all the seeds," yet in a few years it grew into a "large tree, and put forth great branches."

15. Generally, when these truths, justification by faith in particular, were declared in any large town, after a few days or weeks, there came suddenly on the great congregation, not in a corner, (at London, Bristol, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in particular,) a violent and impetuous power, which

> "Like mighty winds or torrents fierce,
> Did then opposers all o'er-run."

And this frequently continued, with shorter or longer intervals, for several weeks or months. But it gradually subsided, and then the work of God was carried on by gentle degrees: while that Spirit, in watering the seed that had been sown, in confirming and strengthening them that had believed,

> "Deign'd his influence to infuse,
> Secret, refreshing as the silent dews."

And this difference in his usual manner of working, was observable, not only in Great Britian and Ireland, but in every part of America, from South to North, wherever the word of God came with power.

16. Is it not then highly probable, that God will carry on his work in the same manner as he has begun it? That he *will* carry it on, I cannot doubt; however Luther may affirm, that a revival of religion never lasts above a generation, that is, thirty years; (whereas, the present revival has already continued above fifty.) Or however prophets of evil may say, "All will be at an end, when the first instru-

ments are removed." There will then, very probably, be a great shaking: but I cannot induce myself to think, that God has wrought so glorious a work, to let it sink and die away in a few years: no, I trust, this is only the beginning of a far greater work: the dawn of "the latter day glory."

17. And is it not probable, I say, that he will carry it on, in the same manner as he has begun? At the first breaking out of this work in this or that place, there may be a shower, a torrent of grace: and so at some other particular seasons, which "the Father has reserved in his own power:" but in general, it seems, the kingdom of God will not "come with observation," but will silently increase wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another. May it not thus spread, first, through the remaining provinces, then, through the isles of North America; and, at the same time, from England to Holland, where there is already a blessed work in Utrecht, Haerlem, and many other cities? Probably, it will spread from these to the Protestants in France, to those in Germany, and those in Switzerland. Then to Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and all the other Protestant nations in Europe.

18. May we not suppose that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion, of the experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will afterwards spread to the Roman Catholics in Great Britain, Ireland, Holland; in Germany, France, Switzerland, and in all other countries, where Romanists and Protestants live intermixed, and familiarly converse with each other? Will it not then be easy for the Wisdom of God to make a way for religion, in the life and power thereof, into those countries that are merely Popish, as Italy, Spain, Portugal? And may it not be gradually diffused from thence to all that name the Name of Christ, in the various provinces of Turkey, in Abyssinia, yea, and in the remotest parts, not only of Europe, but of Asia, Africa, and America?

19. And in every nation under heaven, we may reasonably believe God will observe the same order which he hath done from the beginning of Christianity. *They shall all know me, saith the Lord*, not from the greatest to the least: (this is that wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God;) but "from the least to the greatest," that the praise may not be of men, but of God. Before the end, even the rich shall enter into the kingdom of God. Together with them will enter in the great, the noble, the honourable; yea, the rulers, the princes, the kings of the earth. Last of all, the wise and learned, the men of genius, the philosophers, will be convinced that they are fools; will be "converted and become as little children, and enter into the kingdom of God."

20. Then shall be fully accomplished to *the house of Israel*, the spiritual Israel, of whatever people or nation, that gracious promise, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his

brother; saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Then shall "the times of" universal "refreshment come from the presence of the Lord." The grand pentecost shall "fully come:" and "devout men in every nation under heaven," however distant in place from each other, shall "all be filled with the Holy Ghost." And they will "continue steadfast in the Apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." They will "eat their meat," and do all that they have to do "with gladness and singleness of heart. Great grace will be upon them all:" and they will be "all of one heart and of one soul." The natural, necessary consequence of this will be the same as it was in the beginning of the Christian Church. "None of them will say, that aught of the things which he possesses are his own, but they will have all things common. Neither will there be any among them that want; for as many as are possessed of lands or houses will sell them, and distribution will be made to every man, according as he has need." All their desires, meantime, and passions, and tempers, will be cast in one mould, while all are doing the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven. All their "conversation will be seasoned with salt," and will "minister grace to the hearers," seeing it will not be so much they that speak, "as the Spirit of their Father that speaketh in them." And there will be no "root of bitterness springing up," either to *defile* or trouble them. There will be no Ananias or Sapphira, to bring back the cursed love of money among them. There will be no partiality; no "widows neglected in the daily ministration." Consequently, there will be no temptation, to any *murmuring* thought, or unkind word of one against another, while,

> "They all are of one heart and soul,
> And only love inspires the whole."

21. The grand stumbling block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians; the Mahometans will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their words. And as their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and power, those of them that fear God will soon take knowledge of the spirit whereby the Christians speak. They will "receive with meekness the engrafted word," and will bring forth fruit with patience. From them the leaven will soon spread to those who, till then, had no fear of God before their eyes. Observing the *Christian dogs*, as they used to term them, to have changed their nature, to be sober, temperate, just, benevolent, and that in spite of all provocations to the contrary, from admiring their lives, they will surely be led to consider and embrace their doctrine. And then the Saviour of sinners will say, "The hour is come. I will glorify my Father. I will seek and save the sheep that were wandering on the dark mountains. Now will I avenge myself of my enemy, and pluck the prey out of the lion's teeth. I will resume my

own for ages lost: I will claim the purchase of my blood." So he will go forth in the greatness of his strength, and all his enemies shall flee before him. All the prophets of lies shall vanish away, and all the nations that had followed them, shall acknowledge the Great Prophet of the Lord, "mighty in word and deed:" and "shall honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

22. And then the grand stumbling block being removed from the Heathen nations also, the same Spirit will be poured out upon them, even those that remain in the uttermost parts of the sea. The poor American savage will no more ask, "What are the Christians better than us?" when they see their steady practice of universal temperance, and of justice, mercy, and truth. The Malabarian Heathen will have no more room to say, "Christian man take my wife: Christian man much drunk: Christian man kill man! *Devil-Christian!* Me no Christian." Rather, seeing how far the Christians exceed their own countrymen, in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, they will adopt a very different language, and say, *Angel-Christian!* The holy lives of the Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist: seeing the Christians steadily and uniformly practise what is agreeable to the law written in their own hearts, their prejudices will quickly die away, and they will gladly receive "the truth as it is in Jesus."

23. We may reasonably believe, that the heathen nations which are mingled with the Christians, and those that, bordering upon Christian nations, have constant and familiar intercourse with them, will be some of the first who learn to worship God in spirit and in truth: those, for instance, that live on the continent of America, or in the islands that have received colonies from Europe. Such are likewise all those inhabitants of the East Indies that adjoin to any of the Christian settlements. To these may be added, numerous tribes of Tartars, the heathen parts of the Russias, and the inhabitants of Norway, Finland, and Lapland. Probably these will be followed by those more distant nations with whom the Christians trade: to whom they will impart what is of infinitely more value than earthly pearls, or gold and silver. The God of love will then prepare his messengers, and make a way into the polar regions, into the deepest recesses of America, and into the interior parts of Africa: yea, into the heart of China and Japan, with the countries adjoining them. And "their sound" will then "go forth into all lands, and their voice to the ends of the earth."

24. But one considerable difficulty still remains. There are very many heathen nations in the world, that have no intercourse, either by trade or any other means, with Christians of any kind. Such are the inhabitants of the numerous islands in the South Sea, and probably in all large branches of the Ocean. Now what shall be done for these poor outcasts of men? "How shall they believe," saith the Apostle, "in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" You may add, "And how shall they preach unless they be sent?" Yea, but is not God able to send them? Cannot he raise them up, as it were, out of the stones? And

can he ever want means of sending them? No: were there no other means, he can "take them by his Spirit," (as he did Ezekiel, chap. iii. 12,) or by *his* angel, as he did Philip, (Acts viii.) and set them down wheresoever it pleaseth him. Yea, he can find out a thousand ways, to foolish man unknown. And he surely will: for heaven and earth may pass away; but his word shall not pass away. He will "give his Son the uttermost part of the earth for his possession."

25. And so all Israel too shall be saved. For "blindness has happened to Israel," (as the great Apostle observes, Rom. xi. 25, &c.) till the fulness of the "Gentiles be come in." Then "the Deliverer that cometh out of Sion, shall turn away iniquity from Jacob." "God hath" now "concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all." Yea, and he will so have mercy upon all Israel, as to give them all temporal, with all spiritual blessings. For this is the promise, "For the Lord thy God will gather thee from all nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx. 3. Again, "I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with all my heart and with all my soul," Jeremiah xxxii. 37, &c.

Yet again: "I will take you from among the heathen; and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." Ezekiel xxxvi. 24, &c.

26. At that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian Church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth. "They shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy mountain," Isaiah xi. 9. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise." Thou shalt be encompassed on every side with salvation, and all that go through thy gates shall praise God. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." The light of the sun and moon shall be swallowed up in the light of his countenance shining upon thee. "Thy people also shall be righteous, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," Isaiah lx. 14, &c. and lxi. 11.

27. This I apprehend to be the answer, yea, the only full and satisfactory answer that can be given, to the objection against the wisdom and goodness of God, taken from the present state of the world. It will not always be thus: these things are only permitted for a season, by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immense, eternal good out of this temporary evil. This is the very key which the Apostle himself gives us in the words above recited, "God hath concluded them all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all!" In view of this glorious event, how well may we cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." Although for a season "his judgments were unsearchable, and his ways past finding out," Rom. xi. 32, 33. It is enough, that we are assured of this one point, that all these transient evils will issue well; will have a happy conclusion, and that "mercy first and last will reign." All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that he is already renewing the face of the earth. And we have strong reason to hope, that the work he hath begun he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus: that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises: until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death; and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!" Rev. vii. 12.

SERMON LXIX.

THE NEW CREATION.

"*Behold, I make all things new.*"—REVELATION xxi. 5.

1. WHAT a strange scene is here opened to our view! How remote from all our natural apprehensions! Not a glimpse of what is here revealed was ever seen in the heathen world. Not only the modern, barbarous, uncivilized heathens have not the least conception of it; but it was equally unknown to the refined, polished heathens of ancient Greece and Rome. And it is almost as little thought of or understood by the generality of Christians: I mean, not barely those that are nominally such, that have the form of godliness without the power; but even those that in a measure fear God, and study to work righteousness.

2. It must be allowed, that, after all the researches we can make, still our knowledge of the great truth, which is delivered to us in these words, is exceedingly short and imperfect. As this is a point of mere revelation, beyond the reach of all our natural faculties, we cannot penetrate far into it, nor form any adequate conception of it. But it may be an encouragement to those who have, in any degree, tasted of the powers of the world to come, to go as far as they can go, interpreting scripture by scripture, according to the analogy of faith.

3. The Apostle, caught up in the visions of God, tells us in the first verse of the chapter, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth." And adds, ver. 5, "He that sat upon the throne said, (I believe the only words which he is said to utter throughout the whole book,) "Behold, I make all things new."

4. Very many commentators entertain a strange opinion, that this relates only to the present state of things, and gravely tell us, that the words are to be referred to the flourishing state of the church, which commenced after the heathen persecutions. Nay, some of them have discovered, that all which the Apostle speaks concerning the "new heaven and the new earth," was fulfilled when Constantine the Great poured in riches and honours upon the Christians. What a miserable way is this of making void the whole counsel of God, with regard to all that grand chain of events, in reference to his church, yea, and to all mankind, from the time that John was in Patmos, unto the end of the world! Nay, the line of this prophecy reaches farther still. It does not end with the present world, but shows us the things that will come to pass, when this world is no more. For,

5. Thus saith the Creator and Governor of the universe, "Behold, I make all things new;" all which are included in that expression of the Apostle, "A new heaven and a new earth." *A new heaven.* The original word in Genesis (chap. i.) is in the plural number: and indeed this is the constant language of Scripture; not *heaven*, but *heavens.* Accordingly the ancient Jewish writers are accustomed to reckon three heavens. In conformity to which, the Apostle Paul speaks of his being "caught up into the third heaven." It is this, the third heaven, which is usually supposed to be the more immediate residence of God; so far as any residence can be ascribed to his omnipresent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole universe. It is here, (if we speak after the manner of men,) that the Lord sitteth upon his throne, surrounded by angels and archangels, and by all his flaming ministers.

6. We cannot think that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its great inhabitant. Surely this palace of the Most High was the same from eternity, and will be, world without end. Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the highest of which we usually call the starry heavens. This, St. Peter informs us, "is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and destruction of ungodly men." In that day, "being on fire," it shall, first, "shrivel as

a parchment scroll :" then it shall "be dissolved, and shall pass away with a great noise :" lastly, it shall " flee from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and there shall be found no place for it."

7. At the same time, " the stars shall fall from heaven," the secret chain being broken which had retained them in their several orbits, from the foundation of the world. In the mean while the lower, or sublunary *heaven*, with the *elements*, (or principles that compose it,) " shall melt with fervent heat," while " the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burnt up." This is the introduction to a far nobler state of things, such as it has not yet entered into the heart of man to conceive : the universal restoration which is to succeed the universal destruction. " For we look for," says the Apostle, " new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Peter iii. 7, &c.

8. One considerable difference there will undoubtedly be in the starry heaven, when it is created anew ; there will be no blazing stars, no comets there. Whether those horrid, eccentric orbs are half-formed planets, in a chaotic state, (I speak on the supposition of a plurality of worlds,) or such as have undergone their general conflagration, they will certainly have no place in the new heaven, where all will be exact order and harmony. There may be many other differences between the heaven that now is, and that which will be after the renovation. But they are above our apprehension : we must leave eternity to explain them.

9. We may more easily conceive the changes which will be wrought in the lower heaven, in the region of the air. It will be no more torn by hurricanes, or agitated by furious storms or destructive tempests. Pernicious or terrifying meteors will have no place therein. We shall have no more occasion to say,

> " There like a trumpet, loud and strong,
> Thy thunder shakes our coast :
> While the red lightnings wave along,
> The banners of thy host !"

No : all will then be light, fair, serene : a lively picture of the eternal day.

10. All the elements, (taking that word in the common sense, for the principles of which all natural beings are compounded,) will be new indeed ; entirely changed as to their qualities, although not as to their nature. *Fire* is, at present, the general destroyer of all things under the sun ; dissolving all things that come within the sphere of its action, and reducing them to their primitive atoms. But no sooner will it have performed its last great office of destroying the heavens and the earth, (whether you mean thereby one system only, or the whole fabric of the universe : the difference between one and millions of worlds being nothing before the great Creator ;) when, I say, it has done this, the destructions wrought by fire, will come to a perpetual end. It will destroy no more ; it will consume no more ; it will forget its power to burn, which it possesses only during the

present state of things; and be as harmless in the new heavens and earth, as it is now in the bodies of men and other animals, and the substance of trees and flowers: in all which, (as late experiments show,) large quantities of ethereal fire are lodged: if it be not rather an essential component part of every material being under the sun. But it will, probably, retain its vivifying power, though divested of its power to destroy.

11. It has been already observed, that the calm, placid *air*, will be no more disturbed by storms and tempests. There will be no more meteors, with their horrid glare, affrighting the poor children of men. May we not add, (though at first, it may sound like a paradox,) that there will be no more rain. It is observable, that there was none in Paradise: a circumstance which Moses particularly mentions, Gen. ii. 5, 6; "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth.—But there went up a mist from the earth," which then covered up the abyss of waters, "and watered the whole face of the ground," with moisture sufficient for all the purposes of vegetation. We have all reason to believe, that the case will be the same when Paradise is restored. Consequently, there will be no clouds or fogs; but one bright, refulgent day. Much less will there be any poisonous damps or pestilential blasts. There will be no Sirocco in Italy; no parching or suffocating winds in Arabia; no keen North-East winds in our own country,

"Shattering the graceful locks of yon fair trees;"

but only pleasing, healthy breezes,

"Fanning the earth with odoriferous wings."

12. But what a change will the element of *water* undergo, when all things are made new! It will be, in every part of the world, clear and limpid, pure from all unpleasing or unhealthful mixtures, rising here and there in crystal fountains, to refresh and adorn the earth, "with liquid lapse of murmuring stream." For, undoubtedly, as there were in Paradise, there will be various rivers gently gliding along, for the use and pleasure of both man and beast. But the inspired writer has expressly declared, "there will be no more sea." Rev. xxi. 1. We have reason to believe, that at the beginning of the world, when God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." (Gen. i. 9,) the dry land spread over the face of the water, and covered it on every side. And so it seems to have done, till, in order to the general deluge which God had determined to bring upon the earth at once, "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up." But the sea will then retire within its primitive bounds, and appear on the surface of the earth no more. Neither, indeed, will there be any more need of the sea. For either, as the ancient Poet supposes,

Omnis feret omnia tellus;

every part of the earth will naturally produce whatever its inhabitants want; or all mankind will procure what the whole earth affords, by a much easier and readier conveyance. For all the inhabitants of the earth, our Lord informs us, will then be ισαγγελοι, *equal to angels:* on a level with them in swiftness as well as strength; so that they can, quick as thought, transport themselves, or whatever they want, from one side of the globe to the other.

13. But it seems a greater change will be wrought in the *earth*, than even in the air and water. Not that I can believe that wonderful discovery of Jacob Behme, which many so eagerly contend for, that the earth itself with all its furniture and inhabitants, will then be transparent as glass. There does not seem to be the least foundation for this, either in scripture or reason. Surely not in scripture: I know not one text in the Old or New Testament, which affirms any such thing. Certainly it cannot be inferred from that text in the Revelation, chap. iv. ver. 6; "And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal." And yet, if I mistake not, this is the chief, if not the only scripture which has been urged in favour of this opinion! Neither can I conceive that it has any foundation in reason. It has been warmly alleged, that all things would be far more beautiful, if they were quite transparent. But I cannot apprehend this: yea, I apprehend quite the contrary. Suppose every part of a human body were made transparent as crystal, would it appear more beautiful than it does now? Nay, rather, it would shock us above measure. The surface of the body, in particular, "the human face divine," is undoubtedly, one of the most beautiful objects that can be found under heaven. But could you look through the rosy cheek, the smooth, fair forehead, or the rising bosom, and distinctly see all that lies within, you would turn away from it with loathing and horror.

14. Let us next take a view of those changes which we may reasonably suppose will then take place in the earth. It will no more be bound up with intense cold, nor parched up with extreme heat; but will have such a temperature as will be most conducive to its fruitfulness. If, in order to punish its inhabitants, God did of old

> ——————"Bid his angels turn askance
> This oblique globe,"

thereby occasioning violent cold on one part, and violent heat on the other; he will, undoubtedly, then order them to restore it to its original position: so that there will be a final end, on the one hand, of the burning heat, which makes some parts of it scarce habitable; and on the other, of

> "The rage of Arctos and eternal frost."

15. And it will then contain no jarring or destructive principles within its own bosom. It will no more have any of those violent convulsions in its own bowels. It will no more be shaken or torn

asunder, by the impetuous force of earthquakes; and will, therefore, need neither Vesuvius nor Etna, nor any burning mountains to prevent them. There will be no more horrid rocks, or frightful precipices; no wild deserts or barren sands; no impassable morasses, or unfruitful bogs, to swallow up the unwary traveller. There will, doubtless, be inequalities on the surface of the earth, which are not blemishes, but beauties. And though I will not affirm, that

> ———"Earth hath this variety from heaven,
> Of pleasure situate in hill and dale;"

yet I cannot think gently-rising hills will be any defect; but an ornament of the new made earth. And, doubtless, we shall then likewise have occasion to say,

> "Lo, there his wond'rous skill arrays
> The fields in cheerful green!
> A thousand herbs his hand displays,
> A thousand flowers between!"

16. And what will the general produce of the earth be? Not briars, thorns, or thistles; not any useless or fetid weed; not any poisonous, hurtful, or unpleasant plant; but every one that can be conducive in any wise either to our use or pleasure. How far beyond all that the most lively imagination is now able to conceive! We shall no more regret the loss of the terrestrial Paradise, or sigh at that well-devised description of our great Poet,

> ———"Then shall this mount
> Of Paradise, by might of waves, be mov'd
> Out of his place, push'd by the horned flood,
> With all its verdure spoil'd and trees adrift,
> Down the great river to the opening gulf,
> And there take root, an island salt and bare!"

For all the earth shall be a more beautiful Paradise than Adam ever saw.

17. Such will be the state of the new earth with regard to the meaner, the inanimate parts of it. But great as this change will be, it is nothing in comparison of that which will then take place throughout all animated nature. In the living part of the creation were seen the most deplorable effects of Adam's apostacy. The whole animated creation, whatever has life, from Leviathan to the smallest mite, was thereby *made subject* to such *vanity*, as the inanimate creatures could not be. They were subject to that fell monster, DEATH, the conqueror of all that breathe. They were made subject to its forerunner, pain, in its ten thousand forms; although "God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living." How many millions of creatures in the sea, in the air, and on every part of the earth, can now no otherwise preserve their lives, than by taking away the lives of others; by tearing in pieces and devouring their poor, innocent, unresisting fellow-creatures! Miserable lot of

such innumerable multitudes, who, insignificant as they seem, are the offspring of one common Father, the creatures of the same God of love! It is probable not only two-thirds of the animal creation, but ninety-nine parts of a hundred, are under a necessity of destroying others in order to preserve their own life! But it shall not always be so. He that sitteth upon the throne will soon change the face of all things, and give a demonstrative proof to all his creatures, that "his mercy is over all his works." The horrid state of things which at present obtains, will soon be at an end. On the new earth no creature will kill, or hurt, or give pain to any other. The scorpion will have no poisonous sting, the adder no venomous teeth. The lion will have no claws to tear the lamb; no teeth to grind his flesh and bones. Nay, no creature, no beast, bird, or fish, will have an inclination to hurt any other. For cruelty will be far away, and savageness and fierceness be forgotten. So that violence shall be heard no more, neither wasting or destruction seen on the face of the earth. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb:" (the words may be literally as well as figuratively understood,) "and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." "They shall not hurt or destroy," from the rising up of the sun, to the going down of the same.

18. But the most glorious of all will be, the change which then will take place on the poor, sinful, miserable children of men. These had fallen, in many respects, as from a greater height, so into a lower depth than any other part of the creation. But they shall "hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men: and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be their God." Rev. xxi. 3, 4. Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness, far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in Paradise. In how beautiful a manner is this described by the Apostle! "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are done away." As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto: as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with friends, so there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God. A constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit: a continual enjoyment of the Three-One God, and of all the creatures in him!

SERMON LXX.

THE DUTY OF REPROVING OUR NEIGHBOUR.

"*Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin upon him.*"—LEVITICUS xix. 17.

A GREAT part of the book of Exodus, and almost the whole of the book of Leviticus, relate to the ritual or Ceremonial Law of Moses, which was peculiarly given to the children of Israel; but was such a "yoke," says the Apostle Peter, "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." We are, therefore, delivered from it: and this is one branch of "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Yet it is easy to observe, that many excellent moral precepts are interspersed among the Ceremonial Laws. Several of them we find in this very chapter. Such as, "Thou shalt not gather every grape in thy vineyard: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. I am the Lord your God." ver. 10. "Ye shall not steal, neither lie one to another." ver. 11. "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee till the morning." ver. 13. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind: but thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord." ver. 14. As if he said, I am he whose eyes are over all the earth, and whose ears are open to their cry. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the persons of the poor," (which compassionate men may be tempted to do:) "nor honour the person of the mighty," to which there are a thousand temptations. ver. 15. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people," ver. 16, although this is a sin which human laws have never yet been able to prevent. Then follows, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

In order to understand this important direction aright, and to apply it profitably to our own souls, let us consider,

I. What it is that we are to rebuke or reprove? What is the thing that is here enjoined?

II. Who are they whom we are commanded to reprove? And,

III. How are we to reprove them?

I. 1. Let us consider, first, What is the duty that is here enjoined? What is it we are to rebuke or reprove? And what is

it, To reprove? To tell any one of his faults, as clearly appears from the following words: "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him." Sin is, therefore, the thing we are called to reprove, or rather him that commits sin. We are to do all that in us lies to convince him of his fault, and lead him into the right way.

2. Love, indeed, requires us to warn him not only of sin, (although of this chiefly,) but likewise of any error, which, if it were persisted in, would naturally lead to sin. If we do not hate him in our heart, if we love our neighbour as ourselves, this will be our constant endeavour, to warn him of every evil way, and of every mistake which tends to evil.

3. But if we desire not to lose our labour, we should rarely reprove any one for any one thing that is of a disputable nature, that will bear much to be said on both sides. A thing may possibly appear evil to me: therefore, I scruple the doing of it. And if I were to do it while that scruple remains, I should be a sinner before God. But another is not to be judged by my conscience, to his own Master he standeth or falleth. Therefore, I would not reprove him, but for what is clearly and undeniably evil. Such, for instance, is profane cursing and swearing, which even those who practise it most, will not often venture to defend, if one mildly expostulates with them. Such is drunkenness, which even a habitual drunkard will condemn when he is sober. And such, in the account of the generality of people is the profaning of the Lord's day. And if any who are guilty of these sins, for awhile attempt to defend them, very few will persist to do it, if you look them steadily in the face, and appeal to their own conscience in the sight of God.

II. 1. Let us, in the second place, consider, Who are those that we are called to reprove? It is the more needful to consider this, because it is affirmed by many serious persons, that there are some sinners whom the Scripture itself forbids us to reprove. This sense has been put on that solemn caution of our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount: "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you." But the plain meaning of these words is, do not offer the pearls, the sublime doctrines or mysteries of the gospel, to those whom you know to be brutish men, immersed in sins, and having no fear of God before their eyes. This would expose those precious jewels to contempt, and yourselves to injurious treatment. But even those whom we know to be, in our Lord's sense, dogs and swine, if we saw them do, or heard them speak, what they themselves know to be evil, we ought in any wise to reprove; else "we hate our brother in our heart."

2. The persons intended by our neighbour are every child of man, every one that breathes the vital air, all that have souls to be saved. And if we refrain from performing this office of love to any, because they are sinners above other men, they may persist in their iniquity, but their blood will God require at our hands.

3. How striking is Mr. Baxter's reflections on this head, in his

'Saints' Everlasting Rest.' "Suppose thou were to meet one in the lower world, to whom thou hadst denied this office of love, when ye were both together under the sun; what answer couldst thou make to his upbraiding? At such a time and place, while we were under the sun, God delivered me into thy hands. I then did not know the way of salvation, but was seeking death in the error of my life. And therein thou sufferedst me to remain, without once endeavouring to awake me out of sleep! Hadst thou imparted to me thy knowledge, and warned me to flee from the wrath to come, neither I nor thou need ever to have come into this place of torment."

4. Every one, therefore, that has a soul to be saved, is entitled to this good office from thee. Yet this does not imply, that it is to be done in the same degree to every one. It cannot be denied, that there are some to whom it is particularly due. Such, in the first place, are our parents, if we have any that stand in need of it: unless we should place our consorts and our children on an equal footing with them. Next to these we may rank our brothers and sisters, and afterwards our relations, as they are allied to us in a nearer or more distant manner, either by blood or by marriage. Immediately after these are our servants, whether bound to us for a term of years, or any shorter term. Lastly, such, in their several degrees, are our countrymen, our fellow-citizens, and the members of the same society, whether civil or religious: the latter have a particular claim to our service: seeing these societies are formed with that very design, to watch over each other for this very end, that we may not suffer sin upon our brother. If we neglect to reprove any of these, when a fair opportunity offers, we are undoubtedly to be ranked among those that "hate their brother in their heart." And how severe is the sentence of the Apostle against those who fall under this condemnation! "He that hateth his brother," though it does not break out into words or actions, "is a murderer." "And ye know," continues the Apostle, "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." He hath not that seed planted in his soul, which groweth up unto everlasting life. In other words, he is in such a state, that if he dies therein he cannot see *life*. It plainly follows, that to neglect this is no small thing, but eminently endangers our final salvation.

III. We have seen what is meant by reproving our brother, and who those are that we should reprove. But the principal thing remains to be considered. How, in what manner, are we to reprove them?

1. It must be allowed, that there is a considerable difficulty in performing this in a right manner: although, at the same time, it is far less difficult to some than it is to others. Some there are, who are particularly qualified for it, whether by nature, or practice, or grace. They are not encumbered neither with evil shame, or that sore burden, the fear of man. They are both ready to undertake this labour of love, and skilful in performing it. To these, therefore, it is little or no cross: nay, they have a kind of relish for it.

and a satisfaction therein, over and above that which arises from a consciousness of having done their duty. But be it a cross to us, greater or less, we know that hereunto we are called. And be the difficulty ever so great to us, we know in whom we have trusted; and that he will surely fulfil his word, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

2. In what manner, then, shall we reprove our brother, in order that our reproof may be most effectual? Let us first of all take care, that whatever we do, may be done in "the spirit of love;" in the spirit of tender good-will to our neighbour, as for one who is the son of our common Father, and one for whom Christ died, that he might be a partaker of salvation. Then, by the grace of God, love will beget love. The affection of the speaker will spread to the heart of the hearer; and you will find, in due time, that your labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.

3. Meantime, the greatest care must be taken, that you speak in the spirit of *humility*. Beware that you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. If you think too highly of yourself, you can scarce avoid despising your brother. And if you show, or even feel, the least contempt of those whom you reprove, it will blast your whole work, it will occasion you to lose all your labour. In order to prevent the very appearance of pride, it will be often needful to be explicit on the head: to disclaim all preferring yourself before him: and at the very time you reprove that which is evil, to own and bless God for that which is good in him.

4. Great care must be taken, in the third place, to speak in the spirit of *meekness*, as well as *lowliness*. The Apostle assures us, "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Anger, though it be adorned with the name of zeal, begets anger; not love or holiness. We should therefore avoid, with all possible care, the very appearance of it. Let there be no trace of it, either in the eyes, the gesture, or the tone of your voice; but let these concur in manifesting a loving, humble, and dispassionate spirit.

5. But all this time, see that you do not trust in yourself. Put no confidence in your own wisdom, or address, or abilities of any kind. For the success of all you speak or do, trust not in yourself, but in the great Author of every good and perfect gift. Therefore, while you are speaking, continually lift up your heart to him that worketh all in all. And whatsoever is spoken in the spirit of *prayer*, will not fall to the ground.

6. So much for the *spirit* wherewith you should speak when you reprove your neighbour. I now proceed to the outward *manner*. It has been frequently found, that the prefacing a reproof with a frank profession of good-will, has caused what was spoken to sink deep into the heart. This will generally have a far better effect, than that grand fashionable engine, flattery, by means of which, the men of the world have often done surprising things. But the very same things, yea, far greater, have much oftener been effected, by a plain and artless declaration of disinterested love. When you feel God has kindled this flame in your heart, hide it not; give it full

vent. It will pierce like lightning. The stout, the hard-hearted, will melt before you, and know that God is with you of a truth.

7. Although it is certain that the main point in reproving is, to do it with a right spirit, yet it must also be allowed, there are several little circumstances with regard to the outward manner, which are, by no means, without their use, and therefore are not to be despised. One of these is, Whenever you reprove, do it with great *seriousness;* so that as you really are in earnest, you may likewise appear so to be. A ludicrous reproof makes little impression, and is soon forgot. Besides, that many times it is taken ill, as if you ridiculed the person you reprove. And indeed, those who are not accustomed to make jests, do not take it well to be jested upon. One mean of giving a serious air to what you speak, is, as often as may be, to use the very words of Scripture. Frequently, we find the word of God, even in a private conversation, has a peculiar energy: and the sinner, when he expects it least, feels it "sharper than a two-edged sword."

8. Yet there are some exceptions to this general rule of reproving seriously. There are some exempt cases, wherein, as a good judge of human nature observes,

Ridiculum acri fortius:

A little well-placed raillery will pierce deeper than solid argument. But this has place chiefly when we have to do with those, who are strangers to religion. And when we condescend to give a ludicrous reproof to a person of this character, it seems we are authorized so to do, by that advice of Solomon, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

9. The manner of the reproof may, in other respects too, be varied according to the occasion. Sometimes, you may find it proper to use many words, to express your sense at large. At other times, you may judge it more expedient, to use few words: perhaps a single sentence. And at others, it may be advisable to use no words at all; but a gesture, a sigh, or a look. Particularly, when the person you would reprove is greatly your superior. And frequently, this kind of reproof will be attended by the power of God; and, consequently, have a far better effect than a long and laboured discourse.

10. Once more. Remember the remark of Solomon, "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" It is true, if you are providentially called to reprove any one, whom you are not likely to see any more, you are to snatch the present opportunity, and to "speak in season," or "out of season." But with them whom you have frequent opportunities of seeing, you may wait for a fair occasion. Here the advice of the poet has place. You may speak

Si validus, si lætus erit, si denique poscit:

When he is in a good humour, or when he asks it you. Here you may catch the

Mollia tempora fandi,

time when his mind is in a soft, mild frame. And then God will both teach you how to speak, and give a blessing to what is spoken.

11. But here let me guard you against one mistake. It passes for an indisputable maxim, "Never attempt to reprove a man when he is intoxicated with drink." Reproof, it is said, is then thrown away, and can have no good effect. I dare not say so. I have seen not a few clear instances to the contrary. Take one. Many years ago, passing by a man in Moorfields, who was so drunk, he could hardly stand, I put a paper into his hand. He looked at it, and said, "A Word—a Word to a Drunkard—that is me—Sir, Sir! I am wrong—I know I am wrong—pray let me talk a little with you." He held me by the hand a full half hour. And I believe he got drunk no more.

12. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, do not despise poor drunkards. Have compassion on them! Be instant with them in season and out of season! Let not shame, or fear of men, prevent your pulling these brands out of the burning: many of them are self-condemned:

> "Nor do they not discern the evil plight,
> That they are in."

But they despair; they have no hope of escaping out of it. And they sink into it still deeper, because none else has any hope for them! "Sinners of every other sort," said a venerable old clergyman, have I frequently known converted to God. But an habitual drunkard, I have never known converted." But I have known five hundred, perhaps five thousand. Ho! Art thou one, who readest these words? Then hear thou the words of the Lord! I have a message from God unto thee, O sinner! Thus saith the Lord, Cast not away thy hope. I have not forgotten thee. He that tells thee, "There is no help," is a liar from the beginning. Look up! Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world! This day is salvation come to thy soul: only see that thou despise not him that speaketh! Just now he saith unto thee, "Son, be of good cheer! Thy sins are forgiven thee!"

13. Lastly. You that are diligent in this labour of love, see that you be not discouraged, although after you have used your best endeavours, you should see no present fruit. You have need of *patience*, and then, "after ye have done the will of God" herein, the harvest will come. Never be "weary of well-doing: in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not." Copy after Abraham, who "against hope, still believed in hope." "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and after many days thou shalt find it again."

14. I have now only a few words to add unto you, my brethren, who are vulgarly called Methodists. I never heard or read of any considerable revival of religion, which was not attended with a spirit of reproving. I believe it cannot be otherwise; for what is faith, unless it work by love? Thus it was in every part of England, when the present revival of religion began, about fifty years ago: all the

subjects of that revival, all the Methodists, so called, in every place, were reprovers of outward sin. And indeed so are all that "being justified by faith, have peace with God through Jesus Christ." Such they are at first: and if they use that precious gift, it will never be taken away. Come, brethren! In the name of God, let us begin again! Rich or poor, let us all rise as one man! And in anywise, let every man "rebuke his neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him!" Then shall all Great Britain and Ireland know, that we do not "go a warfare at our own cost." Yea, "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him."

SERMON LXXI.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

"*Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the Signs of the Times?*"—MATTHEW xvi. 3.

1. THE entire passage runs thus: "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him, that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

2. "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came." In general, these were quite opposite to each other: but it is no uncommon thing for the children of the world to lay aside their opposition to each other, (at least, for a season,) and cordially to unite in opposing the children of God: "and tempting," that is, making a trial, whether he was indeed sent of God, "desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven," which they believed no false prophet was able to do. It is not improbable, they imagined, this would convince them, that he was really sent from God. "He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red: and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering." Probably there were more certain signs of fair, and foul weather, in their climate, than there are in ours. "O ye hypocrites," making profession of love, while you have enmity in your hearts: "Ye can discern the face of the sky," and judge thereby what the weather will be: "but

can ye not discern the signs of the times," when God brings his first begotten Son into the world?

3. Let us more particularly inquire, First, What were *the times*, whereof our Lord here speaks? And what were *the signs* whereby those times were to be distinguished from all others? We may then inquire, Secondly, What are *the times* which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand? And how is it, that all who are called Christians do not discern "the signs of these times?"

I. 1. Let us, in the first place, inquire, What times were those, concerning which our Lord is here speaking? It is easy to answer, The times of the Messiah; the times ordained before the foundation of the world, wherein it pleased God, to give his only begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, to be "found in fashion as a man," to live a life of sorrow and pain, and at length to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" to the end that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the important time, the signs whereof the Pharisees and Sadducees could not discern. Clear as they were in themselves, yet so thick a veil was upon the hearts of these men, that they did not discern the tokens of his coming, though foretold so long before.

2. But what were those signs of the coming of that Just One, which had been so long and so clearly foretold? and whereby they might easily have discerned those times, had not the veil been on their hearts? They are many in number; but it may suffice to mention a few of them. One of the first is that pointed out in the solemn words, spoken by Jacob a little before his death, Gen. xlix. 10, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." All, both ancient and modern Jews agree, that by Shiloh we are to understand the Messiah: who was, therefore, to come, according to the prophecy, "before the sceptre," that is, the sovereignty, "departed from Judah." But it did, without controversy, depart from Judah, at this very time; an infallible sign, that at this very time Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, came.

3. A second eminent sign of those times, the times of the coming of the Messiah, is given us in the third chapter of the prophecy of Malachi: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me: ver. 1, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." How manifestly was this fulfilled, first, by the coming of John the Baptist! And then by our blessed Lord himself, "coming suddenly to his temple!" And what sign could be clearer to those that impartially considered the words of the Prophet Isaiah, ch. xl. ver. 4, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!"

4. But yet clearer signs than these, (if any could be clearer,) were the mighty works that he wrought. Accordingly he himself declares, "the works which I do, they testify of me." And to these he explicitly appeals in his answer to the question of John the Baptist: (Not proposed, as some have strangely imagined, from any doubt which he had himself: but from a desire of confirming his

disciples, who might possibly waver, when their Master was taken from their head:) "Art thou he that should come," the Messiah? "Or look we for another?" No bare verbal answer could have been so convincing, as what they saw with their own eyes. Jesus, therefore, referred them to this testimony: "He answered and said unto them, Go, and show John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk: the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Matt. xi. 4, 5.

5. But how then came it to pass, that those who were so sharp-sighted in other things, who could "discern the face of the sky," were not able to discern those signs, which indicated the coming of the Messiah? They could not discern them, not for want of evidence; this was full and clear: but for want of integrity in themselves; because they were a "wicked and adulterous generation:" because the perverseness of their hearts spread a cloud over their understanding. Therefore, although the Sun of Righteousness shone bright, yet they were insensible of it. They were not willing to be convinced: therefore, they remained in ignorance. The light was sufficient: but they shut their eyes that they might not see it. So that they were without excuse, till vengeance came upon them to the uttermost.

II. 1. We are in the second place to consider, What are *the times* which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand? And how is it that all who are called Christians do not discern the "signs of these times?"

The times which we have reason to believe are at hand, (if they are not already begun,) are what many pious men have termed, the time of "the latter-day glory:" meaning the time wherein God would gloriously display his power and love, in the fulfilment of his gracious promise, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea."

2. "But are there in England, or in any part of the world, any *signs* of such a time approaching?" It is not many years since, that a person of considerable learning, as well as eminence in the Church, (then Bishop of London) in his Pastoral Letter, made this observation, "I cannot imagine what persons mean, by talking of *a great work of God* at this time. I do not see any work of God now, more than has been at any other time." I believe it. I believe that great man did not see any extraordinary work of God. Neither he, nor the generality of Christians, so called, saw any signs of the glorious day that is approaching. But how is this to be accounted for? How is it that those who can now "discern the face of the sky," who are not only great Philosophers, but great Divines, as eminent as ever the Sadducees, yea, or the Pharisees were, do not discern the signs of those glorious times, which, if not begun, are nigh even at the door?

3. We allow, indeed, that in every age of the Church, "the kingdom of God came not with observation;" not with splendour and

pomp, or with any of those outward circumstances which usually attend the kingdoms of this world. We allow this "kingdom of God is within us:" and that consequently when it begins, either in an individual or in a nation, it "is like a grain of mustard-seed," which at first "is the least of all seeds:" but, nevertheless, gradually increases till "it becomes a great tree." Or, to use the other comparison of our Lord, it is like "a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

4. But may it not be asked, Are there now any signs that the day of God's power is approaching? I appeal to every candid, unprejudiced person, whether we may not, at this day, discern all those signs, (understanding the words in a spiritual sense,) to which our Lord referred John's disciples. "The blind receive their sight:" Those who were blind from their birth, unable to see their own deplorable state, and much more to see God and the remedy he has prepared for them in the Son of his Love, now see themselves, yea, and "the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." *The eyes* of their *understanding* being now *opened*, they see all things clearly. "The deaf hear:" Those that were before utterly deaf, to all the outward and inward calls of God, now hear not only his providential calls, but also the whispers of his grace. "The lame walk:" Those who never before arose from the earth, or moved one step toward heaven, are now walking in all the ways of God; yea, running the race that is set before them." "The lepers are cleansed:" The deadly leprosy of sin, which they brought with them into the world, and which no art of man could ever cure, is now clean departed from them. And surely never in any age or nation since the Apostles, have those words been so eminently fulfilled. "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," as it is at this day. At this day the gospel leaven, faith working by love, inward and outward holiness, or, (to use the terms of St. Paul,) "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," hath so spread in various parts of Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, Ireland, in the Islands, in the North and South, from Georgia to New England, and Newfoundland: that sinners have been truly converted to God, thoroughly changed both in heart and in life: not by tens, or by hundreds only, but by thousands, yea, by myriads! The fact cannot be denied: we can point out the persons, with their names and places of abode. And yet the wise men of the world, the men of eminence, the men of learning and renown, "cannot imagine what we mean by talking of any extraordinary work of God!" They cannot discern the signs of *these times!* They can see no sign at all of God's arising to maintain his own cause, and set up his kingdom over the earth!

5. But how may this be accounted for? How is it, that they cannot discern the signs of these times? We may account for their want of discernment on the same principle we accounted for that of the Pharisees and Sadducees; namely, that they likewise are what those were, an "adulterous and sinful generation." If their eye

were single, their whole body would be full of light. But suppose their eye be evil, their whole body must be full of darkness. Every evil temper darkens the soul; every evil passion clouds the understanding. How then can we expect that those should be able to discern the signs of the times, who are full of all disorderly passions, and slaves to every evil temper? But this is really the case. They are full of pride; they think of themselves far more highly than they ought to think. They are vain; they "seek honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh of God only." They cherish hatred and malice in their hearts: they give place to anger, to envy, to revenge. They return evil for evil, and railing for railing. Instead of overcoming evil with good, they make no scruple of demanding an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. They "savour not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." They set their affections, not on things above, but on the things that are of the earth. They "love the creature more than the Creator:" They are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." How then should they discern the signs of the times? The god of this world, whom they serve, has blinded their hearts, and covered their minds with a veil of thick darkness. Alas! what have these "souls of flesh and blood," (as one speaks,) to do with God, or the things of God?

6. St. John assigns this very reason for the Jews not understanding the things of God, namely, that in consequence of their preceding sins, and wilful rejecting the light, God had now delivered them up to Satan, who had blinded them past recovery. Over and over, when they might have seen, they would not: they shut their eyes against the light: and now they cannot see, God having given them up to an undiscerning mind; therefore, they do not believe because that Isaiah said, (that is, because of the reason given of that saying of Isaiah,) "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." The plain meaning is, not that God did this by his own immediate power. It would be flat blasphemy to say, that God, in this sense, hardens any man; but his Spirit strives with them no longer, and then Satan hardens them effectually.

7. And as it was with them in ancient times, so it is with the present generation. Thousands of those who bear the name of Christ are now given up to an undiscerning mind. The god of this world hath so blinded their eyes, that the light cannot shine upon them: so that they can no more discern the signs of the times, than the Pharisees and Sadducees could of old. A wonderful instance of this spiritual blindness, this total inability to discern the signs of the times mentioned in scripture, is given us in the very celebrated work of a late eminent writer; who supposes *the New Jerusalem came down from Heaven*, when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian. I say, *called himself a Christian;* for I dare not affirm that he *was one*, any more than Peter the Great. I cannot but believe, he would have

come nearer the mark, if he had said, that was the time when a huge cloud of infernal brimstone and smoke came up from the bottomless pit. For surely there never was a time wherein Satan gained so fatal an advantage over the Church of Christ, as when such a flood of riches, and honour, and power, broke in upon it, particularly on the clergy.

8. By the same rule, what signs would this writer have expected of the approaching conversion of the heathens? He would, doubtless, have expected a hero, like Charles of Sweden, or Frederick of Prussia, to carry fire and sword, and Christianity, through whole nations at once. And it cannot be denied, that since the time of Constantine, many nations have been converted in this way. But could it be said, concerning such conversions as these, "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation?" Surely every one must observe a warrior rushing through the land, at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men? But is this the way of spreading Christianity, which the Author of it, the Prince of Peace, has chosen? Nay, is it in this manner that a grain of mustard seed grows up into a great tree? Is it thus that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Rather, it spreads, by degrees, farther and farther, till the whole is leavened. We may form a judgment of what will be hereafter, by what we have seen already. And this is the way wherein the true Christian Religion, the faith that worketh by love, has been spreading, particularly through Great Britain and its dependencies, for half a century.

9. In the same manner it continues to spread, at the present time also, as may easily appear to all those whose eyes are not blinded. All those that experience in their own hearts the power of God unto salvation, will readily perceive how the same religion which they enjoy, is still spreading from heart to heart. They take knowledge of the same grace of God, strongly and sweetly working on every side: and rejoice to find another and another sinner, first inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?" And then testifying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." Upon a fair and candid inquiry, they find more and more, not only of those who had some form of religion, but of those who had no form at all, who were profligate, abandoned sinners, now entirely changed, truly fearing God and working righteousness. They observe more and more, even of these poor outcasts of men, who are inwardly and outwardly changed, loving God and their neighbour; living in the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth: as they have time, doing good to all men: easy and happy in their lives, and triumphant in their death.

10. What excuse, then, have any that believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, for not discerning the signs of these times, as preparatory to the general call of the heathens? What could God have done which he hath not done to convince you that the day is coming, that the time is at hand, when he will fulfil his glorious promises; when he will arise to maintain his own cause, and, to set up his kingdom over all the earth? What, indeed, unless he had *forced* you

to believe? And this he could not do, without destroying the nature which he had given you. For he made you free agents; having an inward power of self-determination, which is essential to your nature. And he deals with you as free agents from first to last. As such, you may shut or open your eyes, as you please. You have sufficient light shining all around you; yet you need not see it unless you will. But be assured, God is not well pleased with your shutting your eyes, and then saying, "I cannot see." I counsel you to bestow an impartial examination upon the whole affair. After a candid inquiry into matter of fact, consider deeply, "What hath God wrought?" "Who hath seen such a thing? Who hath heard such a thing? Hath not a nation," as it were, been "born in a day?" How swift, as well as how deep, and how extensive a work has been wrought in the present age! And certainly, "not by might, neither by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord." For how utterly inadequate were the means! How insufficient were the instruments to work any such effect! At least, those of which it has pleased God to make use of in the British dominions and in America. But how unlikely instruments, has God been pleased to work from the beginning! "A few young raw heads," said the Bishop of London! "what can they pretend to do?" They pretend to be *that* in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of a man. They pretended, (and do so at this day,) to do the work whereunto they are sent: to do just what the Lord pleased. And if it be his pleasure, to throw down the walls of Jericho, the strong holds of Satan, not by the engines of war, but by the blasts of rams' horns, who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?"

11. Meantime, "blessed are your eyes, for they see: many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things you see, and have not seen them, and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." You see and acknowledge the day of your visitation; such a visitation as neither you nor your fathers had known. You may well say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad therein." You see the dawn of that glorious day, whereof all the prophets have spoken. And how shall you most effectually improve this day of your visitation?

12. The first point is, see that you yourselves receive not the blessing of God in vain. Begin at the root, if you have not already. Now repent and believe the Gospel. If you have believed, "look to yourselves, that ye lose not what you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward! Stir up the gift of God that is within you! Walk in the light as he is in the light." And while you "hold fast that which you have attained, go on unto perfection." Yea, and when you are "made perfect in love," still "forgetting the things that are behind, press on to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

13. It behooves you, in the next place, to help your neighbours. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." As you have time, do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the

household of faith. Proclaim the glad tidings of salvation ready to be revealed, not only to those of your own household, not only to your relations, friends, and acquaintance, but to all whom God providentially delivers into your hands. "Ye," who already know in whom you have believed, "are the salt of the earth." Labour to season, with the knowledge and love of God, all that you have any intercourse with. "Ye are as a city set upon a hill:" ye *cannot*, ye ought not to *be hid*. "Ye are the light of the world. Men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel:" how much less the all-wise God. No, let it "shine to all that are in the house," all that are witnesses of your life and conversation. Above all, continue instant in prayer, both for yourselves, for all the Church of God, and for all the children of men, that they may remember themselves, and be turned unto our God: that they likewise may enjoy the gospel blessing on earth, and the glory of God in heaven.

SERMON LXXII.

ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

"*Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*"—LUKE xii. 7.

1. THE doctrine of Divine Providence has been received by wise men in all ages. It was believed by many of the eminent Heathens, not only Philosophers, but Orators and Poets. Innumerable are the testimonies concerning it, which are scattered up and down in their writings: agreeable to that well known saying in Cicero, "Deorum moderamine cuncta geri:" That all things, all events in this world, are under the management of God. We might bring a cloud of witnesses to confirm this, were any so hardy as to deny it.

2. The same truth is acknowledged at this day in most parts of the world: yea, even by those nations which are so barbarous as not to know the use of letters. So when Paustoobee, an Indian Chief of the Chicasaw Nation in North America, was asked, "Why do you think the Beloved Ones (so they term God) take care of *you?*" He answered, without any hesitation, "I was in the battle with the French, and the bullet went on this side, and the bullet went on that side; and this man died; and that man died: but I am alive still; and by this I know that the Beloved Ones take care of me."

3. But although the ancient as well as modern Heathens had some conception of a Divine Providence, yet the conceptions which

most of them entertained concerning it, were dark, confused, and imperfect; yea, the accounts which the most enlightened among them gave, were usually contradictory to each other. Add to this, that they were by no means assured of the truth of those very accounts. They hardly dared to affirm any thing, but spoke with the utmost caution and diffidence. Insomuch that what Cicero himself, the author of that noble declaration, ventures to affirm in cold blood, at the end of his long dispute upon the subject, amounts to no more than this lame and impotent conclusion, *Mihi verisimilior videbatur Cottæ oratio;* "What Cotta said," (the person that argued in the defence of the Being and Providence of God,) "*seemed* to me *more probable*, than what his opponent had advanced to the contrary."

4. And it is no wonder: for only God himself can give a clear, consistent, perfect account, (that is, as perfect as our weak understanding can receive, in this our infant state of existence; or, at least, as is consistent with the designs of his government,) of his manner of governing the world. And this he hath done in his written Word: all the oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, describe so many scenes of Divine Providence. It is the beautiful remark of a fine writer, "Those who object to the Old Testament in particular, that it is not a connected history of nations, but only a congeries of broken, unconnected events, do not observe the nature and design of these writings. They do not see, that Scripture is *The History of* God." Those who bear this upon their minds, will easily perceive, that the inspired writers never lose sight of it: but preserve one unbroken, connected chain, from the beginning to the end. All over that wonderful Book, as *life and immortality* (immortal life) is gradually *brought to light*, so is *Immanuel, God with us*, and his kingdom ruling over all.

5. In the verses preceding the text, our Lord has been arming his disciples against the fear of man. "Be not afraid," says he, ver. 4, "of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." He guards them against this fear, first, by reminding them of what was infinitely more terrible than any thing which man could inflict: "fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." He guards them farther against it, by the consideration of an over-ruling Providence. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God." Or, as the words are repeated by St. Matthew, with a very inconsiderable variation, ch. x. ver. 29, "Not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

6. We must, indeed, observe, that this strong expression, though repeated by both the Evangelists, need not imply, (though if any one thinks it does, he may think so very innocently,) that God does literally number all the hairs that are on the heads of all his creatures. But it is a proverbial expression, implying, that nothing is so small or insignificant in the sight of men, as not to be an object of the care

and Providence of God, before whom, nothing is small that concerns the happiness of any of his creatures.

7. There is scarce any doctrine in the whole compass of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this. And, at the same time, there is scarce any that is so little regarded, and perhaps so little understood. Let us endeavour then, with the assistance of God, to examine it to the bottom, to see upon what foundation it stands, and what it properly implies.

8. The eternal, almighty, all-wise, all gracious GOD, is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He called out of nothing by his all-powerful Word, the whole Universe: all that is. "Thus the heavens and the earth were created, and all the hosts of them." And after he had set all things else in array, the plants after their kinds, fish and fowl, beasts and reptiles, after their kinds, "he created man after his own image." And the Lord saw, that every distinct part of the universe was good. But when he saw every thing he had made, all things in connexion one with another, "behold, it was very good."

9. And as this all-wise, all-gracious Being created all things, so he sustains all things. He is the Preserver, as well as the Creator of every thing that exists. "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power," that is, by his powerful word. Now it must be that he knows every thing he has made, and every thing that he preserves from moment to moment. Otherwise, he could not preserve it: he could not continue to it the being which he has given it. And it is nothing strange that he who is omnipresent, who "filleth heaven and earth," who is in every place, should see what is in every place, where he is intimately present. If the eye of man discerns things at a small distance; the eye of an eagle what is at a greater; the eye of an angel, what is at a thousand times greater distance, (perhaps taking in the surface of the earth at one view:) how shall not the eye of God see every thing, through the whole extent of creation? Especially considering, that nothing is distant from him, in whom we all "live, and move, and have our being."

10. It is true, our narrow understandings but imperfectly comprehend this. But whether we comprehend it or not, we are certain that so it is. As certain as it is, that he created all things, and that he still sustains all that is created: so certain it is, that he is present, at all times, in all places; that he is above, beneath: that he "besets us behind and before," and, as it were, "lays his hand upon us." We allow, "such knowledge is too high and wonderful for us; we cannot attain unto it." The manner of his presence no man can explain, nor, probably, any angel in heaven. Perhaps what the ancient philosopher speaks of the soul, in regard to its residence in the body, that it is, *tota in toto, et tota in qualibet parte*, might, in some sense, be spoken of the Omnipresent Spirit, in regard to the universe. That he is not only *all in the whole, but all in every part.* Be this as it may, it cannot be doubted but he sees every atom of his creation: and that a thousand times more clearly than

we see the things that are close to us: even of these, we see only the surface, while he sees the inmost essence of every thing.

11. The Omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of the beings that he hath made. He knows all the connexions, dependencies, and relations, and all the ways wherein one of them can affect another. In particular, he saw all the inanimate parts of the creation, whether in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. He knows how the stars, comets, or planets above, influence the inhabitants of the earth beneath: what influence the lower heavens, with their magazines of fire, hail, snow, and vapours, winds, and storms, have on our planet; and what effects may be produced in the bowels of the earth by fire, air, or water: what exhalations may be raised therefrom, and what changes wrought thereby: what effects every mineral or vegetable may have upon the children of men: all these lie naked and open to the eye of the Creator and Preserver of the universe.

12. He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects. He knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest. He knows every good angel and every evil angel in every part of his dominions: and looks from heaven upon the children of men over the whole face of the earth.

He knows all the hearts of the sons of men, and understands all their thoughts. He sees what any angel, any devil, any man, either thinks, or speaks, or does: yea, and all they feel. He sees all their sufferings, with every circumstance of them.

13. And is the Creator and Preserver of the world unconcerned in what he sees therein? Does he look upon these things either with a malignant or heedless eye? Is he an Epicurean god? Does he sit at ease in the heaven, without regarding the poor inhabitants of earth? It cannot be. He hath made us; not we ourselves: and he cannot despise the work of his own hands. We are his children. And can a mother forget the children of her womb? yea, she may forget; yet will not God forget us! On the contrary, he hath expressly declared, that as his "eyes are over all the earth," so he "is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works." Consequently he is concerned every moment, for what befalls every creature upon earth; and more especially for every thing that befalls any of the children of men. It is hard, indeed, to comprehend this: nay, it is hard to believe it; considering the complicated wickedness, and the complicated misery which we see on every side. But believe it we must, unless we will make God a liar; although it is sure, no man can comprehend it. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before God, and to acknowledge our ignorance. Indeed, how can we expect that a man should be able to comprehend the ways of God! Can a worm comprehend a worm? How much less can it be supposed, that a man can comprehend God!

"For how can finite measure Infinite?"

14. He is infinite in wisdom as well as in power: and all his wisdom is continually employed in managing all the affairs of his Creation for the good of all his creatures. For his wisdom and goodness go hand in hand: they are inseparably united, and continually act in consort with almighty power, for the real good of all his creatures. His power being equal to his wisdom and goodness, continually co-operates with them. And to him all things are possible. He doth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and all deep places. And we cannot doubt of his exerting all his power, as in sustaining, so in governing all that he has made.

15. Only he that can do all things else cannot deny himself: he cannot counteract himself, or oppose his own work. Were it not for this, he would destroy all sin, with its attendant pain, in a moment. He would abolish wickedness out of his whole creation, and suffer no trace of it to remain. But in so doing he would counteract himself, he would altogether overturn his own work, and undo all that he has been doing, since he created man upon the earth. For he created man in his own image: a spirit like himself; a spirit endued with understanding, with will, or affections, and liberty; without which, neither his understanding, nor his affections could have been of any use; neither would he have been capable either of vice or virtue. He could not be a moral agent, any more than a tree or a stone. If, therefore, God were thus to exert his power, there would certainly be no more vice; but it is equally certain, neither could there be any more virtue in the world. Were human liberty taken away, men would be as incapable of virtue as stones. Therefore, (with reverence be it spoken,) the Almighty himself cannot do this thing. He cannot thus contradict himself, or undo what he has done. He cannot destroy out of the soul of man, that image of himself, wherein he made him. And without doing this, he cannot abolish sin and pain out of the world. But were it to be done, it would imply no wisdom at all; but barely a stroke of Omnipotence. Whereas all the manifold wisdom of God, (as well as all his power and goodness,) is displayed in governing man as man: not as a stock or stone, but as an intelligent and free spirit, capable of choosing either good or evil. Herein appears the depth of the wisdom of God, in his adorable Providence! In governing men so as not to destroy either their understanding, will, or liberty. He commands all things, both in heaven and earth, to assist man in attaining the end of his being, in working out his own salvation; so far as it can be done without compulsion, without over-ruling his liberty. An attentive inquirer may easily discern the whole frame of Divine Providence is so constituted, as to afford man every possible help, in order to his doing good and eschewing evil, which can be afforded without turning man into a machine; without making him incapable of virtue or vice, reward or punishment.

16. Meantime, it has been remarked, by a pious writer, that there is, as he expresses it, a three-fold circle of Divine Providence, over and above that which presides over the whole universe. We

do not now speak of that over-ruling hand, which governs the inanimate creation; which sustains the sun, moon, and stars in their stations, and guides their motions: we do not refer to his care of the animal creation, every part of which we know is under his government, who "giveth food unto the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him:" but we here speak of that superintending Providence, which regards the children of men. Each of these is easily distinguished from the others, by those who accurately observe the ways of God. The outermost circle includes the whole race of mankind, all the descendants of Adam, all the human creatures that are dispersed over the face of the earth. This comprises, not only the Christian world, those that name the name of Christ, but the Mahometans also, who considerably out-number even the nominal Christians: yea, and the heathens likewise, who very far out-number the Mahometans and Christians put together. "Is he the God of the Jews," says the Apostle, "and not of the Gentiles also?" And so we may say, Is he the God of the Christians, and not of the Mahometans and heathens? Yea, doubtless of the Mahometans and heathens also. His love is not confined: "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." He careth for the very outcasts of men: it may truly be said,

> "Free as the air thy bounty streams,
> O'er all thy works: thy mercies' beams
> Diffusive as thy sun's, arise."

17. Yet it may be admitted, that he takes more immediate care of those that are comprised in the second, the smaller circle: which includes all that are called Christians, all that profess to believe in Christ. We may reasonably think that these, in some degree, honour him, at least more than the heathens do: God does, likewise, in some measure, honour them, and has a nearer concern for them. By many instances it appears, that the prince of this world has not so full power over these as over the heathens. The God whom they even profess to serve, does, in some measure, maintain his own cause; so that the spirits of darkness do not reign so uncontrolled over them, as they do over the heathen world.

18. Within the third, the innermost circle, are contained only the real Christians: those that worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth. Herein are comprised all that love God, or at least, truly fear God and work righteousness. All in whom is the mind which was in Christ, and who walk as Christ also walked. The words of our Lord above recited peculiarly refer to these. It is to these in particular that he says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He sees their souls and their bodies: he takes particular notice of all their tempers, desires, and thoughts; all their words and actions. He marks all their sufferings, inward and outward, and the source whence they arise: so that we may well say,

"Thou know'st the pains thy servants feel,
Thou hear'st thy children's cry;
And their best wishes to fulfil,
Thy grace is ever nigh."

Nothing relative to these is too great, nothing too little, for his attention. He has his eye continually, as upon every individual person that is a member of this his family, so upon every circumstance that relates either to their souls or bodies, either to their inward or outward state, wherein either their present or eternal happiness is in any degree concerned.

19. But what say the wise men of the world to this? They answer, with all readiness, "Who doubts of this? We are not atheists. We all acknowledge a Providence: that is, a general Providence; for, indeed, the particular Providence of which some talk, we know not what to make of. Surely the little affairs of men are far beneath the regard of the great Creator and Governor of the universe! Accordingly,

"He sees with equal eyes, as Lord of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

Does he indeed? I cannot think it: because, (whatever that fine poet did, or his patron, whom he so deeply despised, and yet grossly flattered,) I believe the Bible; wherein the Creator and Governor of the world himself tells me quite the contrary. That he has a tender regard for the brute creatures I know: he does, in a measure, "take care for oxen: he provideth food for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men." "The lions roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God." "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.

"The various troops of sea and land,
In sense of common want agree:
All wait on thy dispensing hand,
And have their daily alms from thee.
They gather what thy stores disperse,
Without their trouble to provide:
Thou ope'st thy hand: the universe,
The craving world is all supplied."

Our heavenly Father *feedeth the fowls of the air:* But mark! "Are not ye much better than they? Shall he not then much more feed you," who are pre-eminent by so much odds? He does not, in that sense, look upon *you* and *them* "*with equal eyes:*" set you on a level with *them.* Least of all, does he set you on a level with brutes, in respect of life and death: "Right precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Do you really think, the death of a sparrow is equally precious in his sight? He tells us, indeed, that "not a sparrow falleth on the ground without our Father." But he asks, at the same time, "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

20. But, in support of a general, in contradiction to a particular Providence, the same elegant poet lays it down as an unquestionable maxim,

> ——————"The universal Cause,
> Acts not by partial, but by general laws:"

Plainly meaning, that he never deviates from those general laws, in favour of any particular person. This is a common supposition; but which is altogether inconsistent with the whole tenor of Scripture: for if God never deviates from these general laws, then there never was a miracle in the world; seeing every miracle is a deviation from the general laws of nature. Did the Almighty confine himself to these general laws, when he divided the Red Sea? When he commanded the waters to stand on a heap, and make a way for his redeemed to pass over? Did he act by general laws, when he caused the sun to stand still for the space of a whole day? No, nor in any of the miracles which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament.

21. But it is on supposition that the Governor of the world never deviates from those general laws, that Mr. Pope adds those beautiful lines in full triumph, as having now clearly gained the point:—

> "Shall burning Ætna, if a sage requires,
> Forget to thunder, and recall her fires?
> On air or sea new motions be imprest,
> Oh blameless Bethel! to relieve thy breast!
> When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
> Shall gravitation cease, if you go by?
> Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
> For Chartres' head reserve the hanging wall?"

We answer, If it please God to continue the life of any of his servants, he will suspend that or any other law of nature. The stone shall not fall; the fire shall not burn; the floods shall not flow; or, he will give his angels charge, and in their hands shall they bear him up, through and above all dangers.

22. Admitting, then, that in the common course of nature, God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himself from making exceptions to them, whensoever he pleases: either by suspending those laws, in favour of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels: by either of which means he can deliver out of all danger them that trust in him.

"What! You expect miracles then?" Certainly I do, if I believe the Bible. For the Bible teaches me, that God hears and answers prayer. But every answer to prayer is, properly, a miracle. For if natural causes take their course, if things go on in their natural way, there is no answer at all. Gravitation, therefore, shall cease, that is, cease to operate whenever the Author of it pleases. Cannot the men of the world understand these things? That is no

wonder: it was observed long ago, "An unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it."

23. But I have not done with this same *General Providence* yet. By the grace of God, I will sift it to the bottom. And I hope to show it is such stark-staring nonsense, as every man of sense ought to be ashamed of.

You say, "You allow a *general* Providence, but deny a *particular* one." And what is a general, of whatever kind it be, that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of its several particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? Tell me any Genus, if you can, that contains no Species? What is it that constitutes a Genus, but so many Species added together? What, I pray, is a "*Whole that contains no Parts?*" Mere nonsense and contradiction! Every whole must, in the nature of things, be made up of its several parts, insomuch that if there can be no parts, there can be no whole.

24 As this is a point of the utmost importance, we may consider it a little farther. What do you mean by a general Providence, contradistinguished from a particular? Do you mean a Providence, which superintends only the larger parts of the universe? Suppose the sun, moon, and stars. Does it not regard the earth too? You allow it does. But does it not likewise regard the inhabitants of it? Else what doth the earth, an inanimate lump of matter, signify? Is not one spirit, one heir of immortality, of more value than all the earth? Yea, though you add it to the sun, moon, and stars? Nay, and the whole inanimate creation? Might we not say, "These shall perish," but "this remaineth: these all shall wax old as doth a garment:" but this, (it may be said in a lower sense, even of the creature,) "is the same, and his years shall not fail."

25. Or do you mean, when you assert a general Providence, distinct from a particular one, that God regards only some parts of the world, and does not regard others? What parts of it does he regard? Those without, or those within the solar system? Or does he regard some parts of the earth, and not others? Which parts? Only those within the temperate zones? What parts then are under the care of his Providence? Where will you lay the line? Do you exclude from it those that live in the torrid zone? Or those that dwell within the arctic circles? Nay, rather say, "The Lord is loving to every man," and his "care is over all his works."

26. Do you mean, (for we would fain find out your meaning, if you have any meaning at all,) that the Providence of God does, indeed, extend to all parts of the earth, with regard to great and singular events; such as the rise and fall of empires; but that the little concerns of this or that man are beneath the notice of the Almighty? Then you do not consider, that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms, which have place only with respect to men! With regard to the Most High, man, and all the concerns of men, are nothing, less than nothing, before him. And nothing is *small* in his sight, that, in any degree, affects the welfare of any that fear God and work righteousness. What becomes then of your general Providence, exclu-

sive of a particular? Let it be for ever rejected by all rational men, as absurd, self-contradictory nonsense. We may then sum up the whole Scriptural doctrine of Providence, in that fine saying of St. Austin, "Ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!"

> "Father, how wide thy glories shine!
> Lord of the universe—and mine:
> Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
> As all the world were but one soul:
> Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
> As I remain'd thy single care."

27. We may learn from this short view of the Providence of God, first, to put our whole trust in him, who hath never failed them that seek him. Our blessed Lord himself makes this very use of the great truth now before us. *Fear not, therefore;* if you truly fear God, you need fear none beside. He will be a strong tower to all that trust in him, from the face of your enemies. What is there either in heaven or earth that can harm you, while you are under the care of the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth? Let all earth and all hell combine against you; yea, the whole animate and inanimate creation: they cannot harm, while God is on your side: his favourable kindness covers *you as a shield.*

28. Nearly allied to this confidence in God, is the thankfulness we owe for his kind protection. Let those give thanks, whom the Lord thus delivers from the hand of all their enemies. What an unspeakable blessing it is, to be the peculiar care of him that has all power in heaven and earth! How can we sufficiently praise him, while we are under his wings, and his "faithfulness and truth are our shield and buckler?"

29. But meantime we should take the utmost care to walk humbly and closely with our God. Walk humbly: for if you, in any wise, rob God of his honour, if you ascribe any thing to yourself, the things which should have been for your wealth, will *prove* to you "an occasion of falling." And walk closely! See that you have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man. It is, so long as you do this, that you are the peculiar care of your Father which is in heaven. But let not the consciousness of his caring for you, make you careless, indolent, or slothful: on the contrary, while you are penetrated with that deep truth, "The help that is done upon earth, He doth it himself:" be as earnest and diligent in the use of all the means, as if you were your own protector.

Lastly: In what a melancholy condition are those, who do not believe there is any Providence: or, which comes to exactly the same point, not a particular one! Whatever station they are in, as long as they are in the world, they are exposed to numberless dangers, which no human wisdom can foresee, and no human power can resist. And there is no help! If they trust in men, they find them *deceitful upon the weights.* In many cases they cannot help: in others, they will not. But were they ever so willing, they will die: there-

fore, vain is the help of man. And God is far above, out of their sight: they expect no help from him. These modern (as well as the ancient) Epicureans have learned, that the

> ——————"Universal Cause,
> Acts not by partial, but by general laws."

He only takes care of the great globe itself; not of its puny inhabitants. He heeds not how those

> ——————"Vagrant emmets crawl,
> At random on the air-suspended ball."

How uncomfortable is the situation of that man who has no farther hope than this! But, on the other hand, how unspeakably *happy* is the man, "that hath the Lord for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God;" who can say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved." Therefore, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

SERMON LXXIII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD'S COUNSELS.

"*O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God.*"—ROMANS xi. 33.

1. SOME apprehend *the Wisdom* and *the Knowledge* of God to mean one and the same thing. Others believe, that the wisdom of God more directly refers to his appointing the ends of all things, and his knowledge, to the means which he hath prepared and made conducive to those ends. The former seems to be the most natural explication: as the wisdom of God, in its most extensive meaning, must include the one as well as the other; the means as well as the ends.

2. Now the wisdom, as well as the power of God, is abundantly manifested in his Creation, in the formation and arrangement of all his works, in heaven above and in the earth beneath: and in adapting them all to the several ends for which they were designed: insomuch that each of them apart from the rest is good: but all together are *very good;* all conspiring together in one connected system, to the glory of God, in the happiness of his intelligent creatures.

3. As this wisdom appears even to short-sighted men, (and much more to spirits of a higher order,) in the creation and disposition of the whole universe, and every part of it, so it equally appears in their preservation, in his "upholding all things by the word of his power." And it no less eminently appears, in the permanent government of all that he has created. How admirably does his wisdom direct the motions of the heavenly bodies! Of all the stars in the firmament, whether those that are *fixed*, or those that *wander*, though never out of their several orbits! Of the sun in the midst of heaven! Of those amazing bodies, the comets, that shoot in every direction through the immeasurable fields of ether! How does he superintend all the parts of this lower world, this *speck of creation*, the earth! So that all things are still, as they were at the beginning, *beautiful in their seasons:* and summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, regularly follow each other. Yea, all things serve their Creator: "fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, are fulfilling his word." So that we may well say, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the earth!"

4. Equally conspicuous is the wisdom of God in the government of nations, of states and kingdoms: yea, rather, more conspicuous; if infinite can be allowed to admit of any degrees. For the whole inanimate Creation, being totally passive and inert, can make no opposition to his Will. Therefore, in the natural world, all things roll on in an even uninterrupted course. But it is far otherwise in the moral world. Here evil men, and evil spirits, continually oppose the divine Will, and create numberless irregularities. Here, therefore, is full scope for the exercise of all the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in counteracting all the wickedness and folly of men, and all the subtlety of Satan, to carry on his own glorious design, the salvation of lost mankind. Indeed were he to do this by an absolute decree, and by his own irresistible power, it would imply no wisdom at all. But his wisdom is shown, by saving man in such a manner, as not to destroy his nature, nor to take away the liberty which he has given him.

5. But the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, are most eminently displayed in his church: in planting it like a grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds; in preserving and continually increasing it, till it grew into a great tree, notwithstanding the uninterrupted opposition of all the powers of darkness. This the Apostle justly terms *the manifold wisdom* (πολυποικιλος σοφια) *of God.* It is an uncommonly expressive word, intimating that this wisdom in the manner of its operation, is diversified a thousand ways, and exerts itself with infinite varieties. These things the highest "angels desire to look into," but can never fully comprehend. It seems to be with regard to these chiefly, that the Apostle utters that strong exclamation, "How unsearchable are his judgments!" His counsels, designs, impossible to be fathomed! "And his ways" of accomplishing them, "past finding out!" Impossible to be traced. According to the

Psalmist, "His paths are in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known."

6. But a little of this he has been pleased to reveal unto us. And by keeping closely to what he has revealed, meantime comparing the word and the work of God together, we may understand a part of his ways. We may, in some measure, trace this manifold wisdom from the beginning of the world: from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, and from Moses to Christ. But I would now consider it (after just touching on the History of the Church in past ages) only with regard to what he has wrought in the present age, during the last half century: yea, and in this little corner of the world, the British Islands only.

7. In the fulness of time, just when it seemed best to his infinite wisdom, God brought his first-begotten into the world. He then laid the foundation of his Church, though it hardly appeared till the day of Pentecost. And it was then a glorious Church: all the members thereof being "filled with the Holy Ghost," being "of one heart and of one mind, and continuing steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers:" *in fellowship*, that is, having *all things in common;* no man counting *any thing he had his own.*

> "Meek, simple followers of the Lamb,
> They liv'd, and thought, and spake the same:
> They all were of one heart and soul,
> And only love inspir'd the whole."

8. But this happy state did not continue long. See Ananias and Sapphira, through the love of money, ("the root of all evil") making the first breach in the community of goods! See the partiality, the unjust respect of persons on the one side, the resentment and murmuring on the other, even while the Apostles themselves presided over the Church at Jerusalem! See the grievous spots and wrinkles that were found, in every part of the Church, recorded not only in the Acts, but in the Epistles of St. Paul, James, Peter, and John. A still fuller account we have in the Revelation; and, according to this, in what a condition was the Christian Church, even in the first century, even before St John was removed from the earth: if we may judge, (as undoubtedly we may) of the state of the Church in general, from the state of those particular Churches, (all but that of Smyrna) to which our Lord directed his Epistles! And from this time, for fourteen hundred years, it was corrupted more and more, as all History shows, till scarcely any, either of the power or form of religion was left.

9. Nevertheless it is certain, that the gates of hell did never totally prevail against it. God always reserved a seed for himself, a few that worshipped him in spirit and in truth. I have often doubted, whether these were not the very persons whom the rich and honourable Christians, who will always have number as well as power on their side, stigmatized, from time to time, with the title of *Heretics*. Perhaps it

was chiefly by this artifice of the devil and his children, that the good which was in them being evil spoken of, they were prevented from being so extensively useful as otherwise they might have been. Nay, I have doubted, whether that arch heretic, Montanus, was not one of the holiest men in the second century. Yea, I would not affirm, that the arch-heretic of the fifth century, (as plentifully as he has been bespattered for many ages,) was not one of the holiest men of that age, not excepting St. Augustine himself: (a wonderful saint! as full of pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him, as George Fox himself.) I verily believe, the real heresy of Pelagius was neither more nor less than this, the holding that Christians may, by the grace of God, (not without it; that I take to be a mere slander,) "go on to perfection:" or, in other words, "fulfil the law of Christ."

"But St. Augustine says:"—When Augustine's passions were heated, his word was not worth a rush. And here is the secret. St. Augustine was angry at Pelagius. Hence he slandered and abused him (as his manner was) without either fear or shame. And St. Augustine was then in the Christian world, what Aristotle was afterwards. There needed no other proof of any assertion, than "*Ipse dixit:* St. Augustine *said it.*"

10. But to return. When iniquity had overspread the Church as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against it. He raised up a poor monk, without wealth, without power, and at that time without friends, to declare war, as it were, against all the world; against the Bishop of Rome and all his adherents. But this little stone being chosen of God, soon grew into a great mountain; and increased more and more, till it had covered a considerable part of Europe. Yet even before Luther was called home, the love of many was waxed cold. Many that had once run well, turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them. Yea, the greater part of those that once experienced the power of faith, made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The observing this was supposed to be the occasion of that illness (a fit of the stone) whereof Luther died: after uttering these melancholy words: "I have spent my strength for naught. Those who are called by my name, are, it is true, reformed in opinions and modes of worship. But in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the Papists."

11. About the same time it pleased God to visit Great Britain. A few in the reign of King Henry the Eighth, and many more in the three following reigns, were real witnesses of true, scriptural Christianity. The number of these exceedingly increased, in the beginning of the following century. And in the year 1627, there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit in several parts of England, as well as in Scotland, and the North of Ireland. But from the time that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their hearts began to be estranged from him, and to cleave to the present world: no sooner was persecution ceased, and the poor, despised, persecuted Christians, invested with power, and placed in ease and

affluence, but a change of circumstances brought a change of spirit. Riches and honour soon produced their usual effects. Having the world, they quickly loved the world. They no longer breathed after heaven, but became more and more attached to the things of the earth. So that in a few years, one who knew and loved them well, and was an unexceptionable judge of men and manners, (Dr. Owen,) deeply lamented over them, as having lost all the life and power of religion, and being become just of the same spirit with those, whom they despised as the mire in the streets.

12. What little religion was left in the land, received another deadly wound at the Restoration, by one of the worst princes that ever sat on the English throne, and by the most abandoned court in Europe. And infidelity now broke in amain, and overspread the land as a flood. Of course, all kind of immorality came with it, and increased to the end of the century. Some feeble attempts were made to stem the torrent during the reign of Queen Anne. But it still increased till about the year 1725, when Mr. Law published his *Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection;* and not long after, his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.* Here the seed was sown, which soon grew up, and spread to Oxford, London, Bristol, Leeds, York, and, within a few years, to the greatest part of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

13. But what means did the wisdom of God make use of in effecting this great work? He thrust out such labourers into his harvest, as the wisdom of man would never have thought on. He chose the weak things to confound the strong, and the foolish things to confound the wise. He chose a few young, poor, ignorant men, without experience, learning, or art; but simple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, seeking no honour, no profit, no pleasure, no ease, but merely to save souls; fearing neither want, pain, persecution, nor whatever man could do unto them: yea, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy. Of the same spirit were the people whom God by their word called out of darkness into his marvellous light, many of whom soon agreed to join together, in order to strengthen each other's hands in God. These also were simple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works; desiring neither honour, nor riches, nor pleasure, nor ease, nor any thing under the sun; but to attain the whole image of God, and to dwell with him in glory.

14. But as these young preachers grew in years, they did not all grow in grace. Several of them indeed increased in other knowledge; but not proportionably in the knowledge of God. They grew less simple, less alive to God, and less devoted to him. They were less zealous for God, and, consequently, less active, less diligent in his service. Some of them began to desire the praise of men and not the praise of God only; some to be weary of a wandering life, and so to seek ease and quietness. Some began again to fear the faces of men; to be ashamed of their calling; to be unwilling to deny themselves, and to take up their cross daily, "and endure hardship as good sol-

diers of Jesus Christ." Wherever these preachers laboured, there was not much fruit of their labours. Their word was not as formerly, clothed with power: it carried with it no demonstration of the Spirit. The same faintness of spirit was in their private conversation. They were no longer "instant in season, and out of season: warning every man, and exhorting every man, if by any means they might save some."

15. But as some preachers *declined from their first love*, so did many of the people. They were likewise assaulted on every side, encompassed with manifold temptations. And while many of them triumphed over all, and were "more than conquerors through him that loved them," others gave place to the world, the flesh, or the devil, and so "entered into temptation:" some of them "made shipwreck of their faith" at once: some by slow, insensible degrees. Not a few being in want of the necessaries of life, were overwhelmed with the cares of the world. Many relapsed into the desires of other things, which choked the good seed, "and it became unfruitful."

16. But of all temptations, none so struck at the whole work of God, as "the deceitfulness of riches:" a thousand melancholy proofs of which I have seen, within these last fifty years. Deceitful are they indeed! For who will believe they do him the least harm? And yet I have not known threescore rich persons, perhaps not half the number, during threescore years, who, as far as I can judge, were not less holy than they would have been had they been poor. By *riches* I mean, not thousands of pounds; but any more than will procure the conveniences of life. Thus I account him a rich man, who has food and raiment for himself and family, without running into debt, and something over. And how few are there in these circumstances who are not hurt, if not destroyed thereby! Yet who takes warning? Who seriously regards that awful declaration of the Apostle, even "they that desire to be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition." How many sad instances have we seen of this in London, in Bristol, in Newcastle, in all the large trading towns throughout the kingdom, where God has lately caused his power to be known! See how many of those who were once simple of heart, desiring nothing but God, are now gratifying "the desire of the flesh," studying to please their senses: particularly their taste: endeavouring to enlarge the pleasure of tasting as far as possible. Are not *you* of that number? Indeed you are no drunkard, and no glutton. But do you not indulge yourself in a kind of regular sensuality? Are not eating and drinking the greatest pleasures of your life, the most considerable part of your happiness? If so, I fear St. Paul would have given you a place among those "whose god is their belly!" How many of them are now again indulging "the desire of the eye!" Using every means which is in their power, to enlarge the pleasures of their imagination! If not in grandeur, which as yet is out of their way, yet in new or beautiful things! Are not you seeking happiness in pretty or elegant apparel, or furniture? Or in new clothes, or books, or in pictures, or gardens? "Why, what harm is there in

these things?" There is this harm, that they gratify "the desire of the eye," and thereby strengthen and increase it; making you more and more dead to God, and more alive to the world. How many are indulging "the pride of life!" Seeking the honour that cometh of men? Or "laying up treasures on earth?" They *gain all they can*, honestly and conscientiously. They *save all they can*, by cutting off all needless expense; by adding frugality to diligence. And so far all is right. This is the duty of every one that fears God. But they do not *give all they can;* without which they must needs grow more and more earthly minded. Their affections will cleave to the dust more and more, and they will have less and less communion with God. Is not this *your* case? Do you not seek the praise of men more than the praise of God? Do not *you* lay up, or at least desire and endeavour to "lay up treasures on earth?" Are you not then (deal faithfully with your own soul!) more and more alive to the world? And, consequently, more and more dead to God? It cannot be otherwise. That *must* follow, unless you give all you can, as well as gain and save all you can. There is no other way under heaven to prevent your money from sinking you lower than the grave. For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if it *was* in him in ever so high a degree, yet if he slides into the love of the world, by the same degrees that this enters in, the love of God will go out of the heart.

17. And perhaps there is something more than all this contained in those words, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Here we are expressly warned against loving *the world*, as well as against loving "the things of the world." *The world*, is the men that know not God: that neither love nor fear him. To love these with a love of delight or complacence, to set our affections upon them, is here absolutely forbidden: and, by parity of reason, to converse or have any intercourse with them, farther than necessary business requires. Friendship or intimacy with them, St. James does not scruple to term adultery. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend to the world is an enemy of God." Do not endeavour to shuffle away, or evade the meaning of those strong words. They plainly require us to stand aloof from them; to have no needless commerce with unholy men. Otherwise we shall surely slide into conformity to the world, to their maxims, spirit, and customs. For not only their words, harmless as they seem, do eat as do a canker: but their very breath is infectious: their spirit imperceptibly influences our spirit. It steals "like water into our bowels, and like oil into our bones."

18. But all rich men are under a continual temptation to acquaintance and conversation with worldly men. They are likewise under a continual temptation to pride, to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. They are strongly tempted to revenge, when they are ever so little affronted. And having the means in their own hands, how few are there that resist the temptation! They are

continually tempted to sloth, indolence, love of ease, softness, delicacy: to hatred of self-denial, and taking up the cross, even that of *fasting* and *rising early*, without which it is impossible to grow in grace. If *you* are increased in goods, do not you know that these things are so? Do you contract no intimacy with worldly men? Do not you converse with them more than duty requires? Are you in no danger of pride? Of thinking yourself better than your poor, dirty neighbours? Do you never resent, yea, and revenge an affront? Do you never render evil for evil? Do not you give way to indolence or love of ease? Do you deny yourself, and take up your cross daily? Do you constantly rise as early as you did once? Why not? Is not your soul as precious now as it was then? How often do you fast? Is not this *your* duty as much as that of a day labourer? But if you are wanting in this, or any other respect, who will tell you of it? Who dares tell you the plain truth, but those who neither hope nor fear any thing from you? And if any venture to deal plainly with you, how hard is it for you to bear it! Are not you far less susceptible of reproof, far less advisable than when you were poor? It is well if you can bear reproof even from *me*: and in a few days you will see me no more.

Once more, therefore, I say, having gained and saved all you can, do you give all you can: else your money will eat your flesh as fire, and will sink you to the nethermost hell!

O beware of "laying up treasures upon earth!" Is it not treasuring wrath against the day of wrath?

Lord, I have warned them! but if they will not be warned, what can I do more? I can only "give them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations!"

19. By not taking this warning, it is certain many of the Methodists are already fallen. Many are falling at this very time. And there is great reason to apprehend, that many more will fall, most of whom will rise no more.

But what method may it be hoped the all-wise God will take, to repair the decay of his work? If he does not remove the candlestick from this people, and raise up another people, who will be more faithful to his grace, it is probable he will proceed in the same manner as he has done in time past. And this has hitherto been his method. When any of the old preachers *left their first love*, lost their simplicity and zeal, and departed from the work, he raised up young men, who *are* what they *were*, and sent them into the harvest in their place. The same he has done, when he was pleased to remove any of his faithful labourers into Abraham's bosom. So when Henry Millard, Edward Dunstone, John Manners, Thomas Walsh, or others, rested from their labours, he raised up other young men from time to time willing and able to perform the same service. It is highly probable, he will take the very same method for the time to come. The place of those preachers who either die in the Lord or lose the spiritual life which God had given them, he will supply by others that are alive to God, and desire only to spend and be spent for him.

20. Hear ye this, all ye preachers, who have not the same life, the same communion with God, the same zeal for his cause, the same burning love to souls, that you had once! "Take heed unto yourselves, that ye lose not the things ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Beware lest God swear in his wrath, that ye shall bear his standard no more! Lest he be provoked to take the word of his grace utterly out of your mouth! Be assured, the Lord hath no need of *you; his* work doth not depend upon *your* help. As he is able "out of stones, to raise up children to Abraham;" so he is able out of the same to raise up preachers after his own heart! O make haste! Remember from whence you are fallen; and repent and do the first works!

21. Would it not provoke the Lord of the harvest, to lay you altogether aside, if you *despised* the labourers he had raised up, merely because of their *youth?* This was commonly done to us, when *we* were first sent out, between forty and fifty years ago. Old, wise men asked, "What will these *young* heads do?" So the then Bishop of London in particular. But shall we adopt their language? God forbid! Shall we teach him, whom he shall send? whom he shall employ in his own work? Are we then the *men*, and shall *wisdom die with us?* Does the work of God hang upon us? O humble yourselves before God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver!

22. Let us next consider what method has the wisdom of God taken for these five and forty years, when thousands of *the people* that once ran well, one after another, "drew back to perdition?" Why, as fast as any of the poor were overwhelmed with worldly care, so that the seed they had received became unfruitful: and as fast as any of the rich drew back unto perdition by giving way to the love of the world, to foolish and hurtful desires, or to any other of those innumerable temptations, which are inseparable from riches: God has constantly, from time to time, raised up men, endued with the spirit which they had lost. Yea, and generally this change has been made with considerable advantage. For the last were, not only (for the most part) more numerous than the first, but more watchful, profiting by their example: more spiritual, more heavenly-minded, more zealous, more alive to God, and more dead to all things here below.

23. And, blessed be God, we see he is now doing the same thing in various parts of the kingdom. In the room of those that have fallen from their steadfastness, or are falling at this day, he is continually raising up out of the stones other children to Abraham. This he does at one or another place, according to his own will: pouring out his quickening Spirit on this or another people, just as it pleaseth him. He is raising up those of every age and degree, young men and maidens, old men and children, to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to show forth his praise, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And we have no reason to doubt, but he will continue so to do, till the great promise is fulfilled, till "the earth is

filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea: till all Israel is saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles is come in."

24. But have all that have sunk under manifold temptations, so fallen that they can rise no more? Hath the Lord "cast them all off for ever, and will he be no more entreated? Is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore?" God forbid that we should affirm this! Surely he is able to heal all their backslidings: for with God, no word is impossible. And is he not willing too? He is "God, and not man; therefore, his compassions fail not." Let no backslider despair. "Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Meantime, thus saith the Lord to you that now supply their place, "Be not high-minded, but fear!" If "the Lord spared not" thy elder brethren, "take heed lest he spare not thee!" Fear, though not with a servile, tormenting fear, lest thou fall by any of the same temptations, by either the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things. Tempted you will be in ten thousand different ways, perhaps as long as you remain in the body: but as long as you continue to watch and pray, you will not "enter into temptations." His grace has been hitherto sufficient for you; and so it will be unto the end.

25. You see here, brethren, a short and general sketch of the manner wherein God works upon earth, in repairing this work of grace, wherever it is decayed through the subtlety of Satan, and the unfaithfulness of men, giving way to the fraud and malice of the devil. Thus he is now carrying on his own work, and thus he will do to the end of time. And how wonderfully plain and simple is his way of working, in the spiritual as well as the natural world! That is, his general plan of working, of repairing whatsoever is decayed. But as to innumerable particulars, we must still cry out, "O the depth! How unfathomable are his counsels, and his paths past tracing out!"

SERMON LXXIV.

THE IMPERFECTION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

"*We know in part.*"—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 9.

1. THE desire of knowledge is an universal principle in man, fixed in his inmost nature. It is not variable, but constant in every rational creature, unless while it is suspended by some stronger de-

sire. And it is insatiable; "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;" neither the mind with any degree of knowledge that can be conveyed into it. And it is planted in every human soul for excellent purposes. It is intended to hinder our taking up our rest on any thing here below: to raise our thoughts to higher and higher objects, more and more worthy our consideration, till we ascend to the source of all knowledge, and all excellence, the all-wise, and all-gracious Creator.

2. But although our desire of knowledge has no bounds, yet our knowledge itself has. It is, indeed, confined within very narrow bounds; abundantly narrower than common people imagine, or men of learning are willing to acknowledge: a strong intimation (since the great Creator doth nothing in vain) that there will be some future state of being, wherein that now insatiable desire will be satisfied, and there will be no longer so immense a distance between the appetite and the object of it.

3. The present knowledge of man is exactly adapted to his present wants. It is sufficient to warn us of, and to preserve us from most of the evils to which we are now exposed: and to procure us whatever is necessary for us in this our infant state of existence. We know enough of the nature and sensible qualities of the things that are round about us, so far as they are subservient to the health and strength of our bodies. We know how to procure and prepare our food: we know what raiment is fit to cover us: we know how to build our houses, and to furnish them with all necessaries and conveniences. We know just as much as is conducive to our living comfortably in this world. But of innumerable things above, below, and round about us, we know little more than that they exist. And in this our deep ignorance is seen the goodness, as well as the wisdom of God, in cutting short our knowledge on every side, on purpose to *hide pride from man.*

4. Therefore it is, that by the very constitution of their nature, the wisest of men *know* but *in part.* And how amazingly small a part do they know, either of the Creator, or of his works! This is a very needful, but a very unpleasing theme; for "vain man would" be wise." Let us reflect upon it for awhile. And may the God of wisdom and love open our eyes to discern our own ignorance!

I. 1. To begin with the great Creator himself. How astonishingly little do we know of God!—How small a part of his nature do we know! Of his essential attributes. What conception can we form of his Omnipresence? Who is able to comprehend, how God is in this and every place? How he fills the immensity of space? If philosophers, by denying the existence of a vacuum, only meant that there is no place empty of God, that every point of infinite space is full of God, certainly no man could call it in question. But still, the fact being admitted, what is Omnipresence or Ubiquity? Man is no more able to comprehend this, than to grasp the universe.

2. The Omnipresence or Immensity of God, Sir Isaac Newton endeavours to illustrate, by a strong expression, by terming infinite

space "the sensorium of the Deity." And the very heathens did not scruple to say, "All things are full of God:" just equivalent with his own declaration, "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord?" How beautifully does the Psalmist illustrate this: "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there thy hand shall find me, and thy right hand shall hold me." But, in the meantime, what conception can we form, either of his eternity or immensity? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we cannot attain unto it.

3. A second essential attribute of God is eternity. He existed before all time. Perhaps we might more properly say, He *does exist* from everlasting to everlasting. But what is eternity? A celebrated author says, that the divine eternity is, "Vitæ interminabilis tota simul et perfecta possessio:" The at once entire and perfect possession of never ending life. But how much wiser are we for this definition? We know just as much of it as we did before. "The at once entire and perfect possession?" Who can conceive what this means?

4. If, indeed, God had stamped (as some have maintained) an idea of himself on every human soul, we must certainly have understood something of these, as well as his other attributes. For we cannot suppose he would have impressed upon us either a false or an imperfect idea of himself. But the truth is, no man ever did, or does now, find any such idea stamped upon his soul. The little which we do know of God, (except what we receive by the inspiration of the Holy One,) we do not gather from any inward impression, but gradually acquire from without. "The invisible things of God," if they are known at all, "are known from the things that are made: "not from what God hath written in our hearts, but from what he hath written in all his works.

5. Hence then, from his works, particularly his works of creation, we are to learn the knowledge of God. But it is not easy to conceive how little we know even of these; to begin with those that are at a distance. Who knows how far the universe extends? What are the limits of it? The morning stars can tell, who sang together, when the lines of it were stretched out: when God said, "This be thy just circumference, O world!" But all beyond the fixed stars is utterly hid from the children of men. And what do we know of the fixed stars? Who telleth the number of them? Even that small portion of them, that by their mingled light form, what we call, *the milky way?* And who knows the use of them? Are they so many suns that illuminate their respective planets? Or do they only minister to this, (as Mr. Hutchinson supposes) and contribute, in some unknown way, to the perpetual circulation of light and spirit? Who knows what comets are? Are they planets not fully formed? Or planets destroyed by a conflagration? Or are they bodies of a wholly

different nature, of which we can form no idea? Who can tell, what is the sun? Its use we know; but who knows of what substance it is composed? Nay, we are not yet able to determine, whether it be fluid or solid! Who knows what is the precise distance of the sun from the earth? Many astronomers are persuaded, it is a hundred millions of miles; others, that it is only eighty-six millions, though generally accounted ninety. But equally great men say, it is no more than fifty; some of them, that it is but twelve. Last comes Dr. Rogers, and demonstrates that it is just two millions, nine hundred thousand miles! So little do we know even of this glorious luminary, the eye and soul of the lower world! And just as much of the planets that surround him: yea, of our own planet, the moon. Some indeed have discovered

"Rivers and mountains on her spotty globe:"

Yea, have marked out all her seas and continents! But after all, we know just nothing of the matter. We have nothing but mere, uncertain conjecture, concerning the nearest of all the heavenly bodies.

6. But let us come to the things that are still nearer home, and inquire what knowledge we have of them. How much do we know of that wonderful body, *light?* How is it communicated to us? Does it flow in a continued stream from the sun? Or does the sun impel the particles next his orb, and so on and on, to the extremity of his system? Again, Does light gravitate or not? Does it attract or repel other bodies? Is it subject to the general laws, which obtain in all other matter? Or is it a body *sui generis*, altogether different from all other matter? Is it the same with electric fluid, or not? Who can explain the phenomena of electricity? Who knows why some bodies conduct the electric fluid, and others arrest its course? Why is the phial capable of being charged to such a point, and no farther? A thousand more questions might be asked on this head, which no man living can answer.

7. But surely we understand the air we breathe, and which encompasses us on every side. By that admirable property of elasticity, it is the general spring of nature. But is elasticity essential to air, and inseparable from it? Nay, it has been lately proved, by numberless experiments, that air may be fixed, that is, divested of its elasticity, and generated, or restored to it again. Therefore, it is no otherwise elastic, than as it is connected with electric fire. And is not this electric or ethereal fire, the only true essential elastic in nature? Who knows by what power dew, rain, and other vapours, rise and fall in the air? Can we account for the phenomenon of them upon the common principles? Or must we own, with a late ingenious author, that those principles are utterly insufficient, and that they cannot be rationally accounted for, but upon the principle of electricity?

8. Let us now descend to the earth which we tread upon, and which God has peculiarly given to the children of men. Do the

children of men understand this? Suppose the terraqueous globe to be seven or eight thousand miles in diameter, how much of this do we know? Perhaps a mile or two of its surface: so far the art of man has penetrated. But who can inform us, what lies beneath the region of stones, metals, minerals, and other fossils? This is only a thin crust, which bears an exceeding small proportion to the whole. Who can acquaint us with the inner parts of the globe? Whereof do these consist? Is there a central fire, a grand reservoir, which not only supplies the burning mountains, but also ministers, (though we know not how) to the ripening of gems and metals; yea, and perhaps to the production of vegetables, and the well-being of animals too? Or is the great deep still contained in the bowels of the earth, a central abyss of waters? Who hath seen? Who can tell? Who can give any solid satisfaction to a rational inquirer?

9. How much of the very surface of the globe is still utterly unknown to us! How little do we know of the polar regions, either North or South, either in Europe or Asia! How little of those vast countries, the inland parts either of Africa or America! Much less do we know what is contained in the broad sea, the great abyss, which covers so large a part of the globe. Most of its chambers are inaccessible to man, so that we cannot tell how they are furnished. How little do we know of those things on the dry land, which fall directly under our notice! Consider even the most simple metals or stones: how imperfectly are we acquainted with their nature and properties! Who knows what it is that distinguishes metals from all other fossils? It is answered, "Why, they are heavier." Very true, but what is the cause of their being heavier? What is the specific difference between metals and stones? Or between one metal and another? Between gold and silver? Between tin and lead? It is all mystery to the sons of men.

10. Proceed we to the vegetable kingdom. Who can demonstrate that the sap, in any vegetable, performs a regular circulation through its vessels, or that it does not? Who can point out the specific difference between one kind of plant and another? Or the peculiar, internal conformation, and disposition of their component parts? Yea, what man living thoroughly understands the nature and properties of any one plant under heaven?

11. With regard to animals. Are microscopic animals, so called, *real* animals, or not? If they are, are they not essentially different from all other animals in the universe, as not requiring any food, not generating or being generated? Are they no animals at all, but merely inanimate particles of matter, in a state of fermentation? How totally ignorant are the most sagacious of men, touching the whole affair of generation! Even the generation of men. *In* the *book* of the Creator, indeed, *were all* our *members written*, "which day by day were fashioned, when, as yet, there were none of them." But by what rule were they fashioned? In what manner? By what means was the first motion communicated to the *punctum saliens?* When, and how, was the immortal spirit superadded to the senseless

clay? It is mystery all. And we can only say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

12. With regard to insects, many are the discoveries which have been lately made. But how little is all that is discovered yet in comparison of what is undiscovered? How many millions of them, by their extreme minuteness, totally escape all our inquiries? And, indeed, the minute parts of the largest animals, elude our utmost diligence. Have we a more complete knowledge of fishes than we have of insects? A great part, if not the greatest part, of the inhabitants of the waters, are totally concealed from us. It is probable, the species of sea-animals are full as numerous as the land-animals. But how few of them are known to us! And it is very little we know of those few. With birds we are a little better acquainted: and, indeed, it is but a little. For of very many we know hardly any thing more than their outward shape. We know a few of the obvious properties of others, chiefly those that frequent our houses. But we have not a thorough, adequate knowledge even of them. How little do we know of beasts! We do not know whence the different tempers and qualities arise, not only in different species of them, but in individuals of the same species; yea, and frequently in those who spring from the same parents, the same both male and female animal. Are they mere machines? Then they are incapable of pleasure or pain. Nay, they can have no senses: they neither see nor hear; they neither taste nor smell. Much less can they know or remember; or move, any otherwise than they are impelled from without. But all this, as daily experiments show, is quite contrary to matter of fact.

13. Well; but if we know nothing else, do not we know ourselves? Our bodies and our souls? What is our soul? It is a spirit, we know. But what is a spirit? Here we are at a full stop. And where is the soul lodged? In the pineal gland? In the whole brain? In the heart? In the blood? In any single part of the body? Or, (if any one can understand those terms) "all in all, and all in every part?" How is the soul united to the body? A spirit to a clod? What is the secret, imperceptible chain that couples them together? Can the wisest of men give a satisfactory answer to any one of these plain questions?

And as to our body itself, how little do we know! During a night's sleep, a healthy man perspires one part in four less when he sweats, than when he does not. Who can account for this? What is flesh? That of the muscles in particular? Are the fibres that compose it of a determinate size? So that they can be divided only so far? Or are they resolvable *in infinitum?* How does a muscle act? By being inflated, and consequently shortened? But what is it inflated with? If with blood, how and whence comes that blood? And whither does it go, the moment the muscle is relaxed? Are the nerves pervious or solid? How do they act? By vibration or transmission of the animal spirits? Who knows what the animal spirits are? Are they electric fire? What is sleep? Wherein does it consist? What

is dreaming? How can we know dreams from waking thoughts? I doubt, whether any man knows. O how little do we know, even concerning ourselves? What then can we expect to know, concerning the whole creation of God?

II. 1. But are we not better acquainted with his *works of Providence*, than with his works of Creation? It is one of the first principles of religion, that his kingdom ruleth over all: so that we may say with confidence, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name over all the earth!" It is a childish conceit, to suppose chance governs the world, or has any part in the government of it: no, not even in those things, that, to a vulgar eye, appear to be perfectly casual. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the disposal thereof is from the Lord." Our blessed Master himself has put this matter beyond all possible doubt. "Not a sparrow," saith he, "falleth to the ground without the will of your Father which is in heaven." Yea, (to express the thing more strongly still,) "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

2. But although we are well apprised of this general truth, that all things are governed by the Providence of God, (the very language of the heathen orator, "Deorum moderamine cuncta geri,") yet how amazingly little do we know of the particulars contained under this general! How little do we understand of his providential dealings, either with regard to nations, or families, or individuals? There are heights and depths in all these, which our understanding can in no wise fathom. We can comprehend but a small part of his ways now; the rest we shall know hereafter.

3. Even with regard to entire nations, how little do we comprehend of God's providential dealings with them! What innumerable nations in the eastern world once flourished, to the terror of all around them, and are now swept away from the face of the earth; and their memorial is perished with them! Nor has the case been otherwise in the west. In Europe also we read of many large and powerful kingdoms, of which the names only are left: the people are vanished away, and are as though they had never been. But why it has pleased the Almighty Governor of the world, to sweep them away with the besom of destruction, we cannot tell: those who succeeded them being, many times, little better than themselves.

4. But it is not only with regard to ancient nations, that the providential dispensations of God are utterly incomprehensible to us: the same difficulties occur now. We cannot account for his present dealings with the inhabitants of the earth. We know, "the Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." But we know not how to reconcile this with the present dispensations of his Providence. At this day, is not almost every part of the earth full of darkness and cruel habitations? In what a condition, in particular, is the large and populous empire of Indostan! How many hundreds of thousands of the poor, quiet people, have been destroyed, and their carcasses left as the dung of the earth! In what a condition (though they have no English ruffians there) are the numberless

islands in the Pacific ocean! How little is their state above that of wolves and bears! And who careth either for their souls or their bodies! But does not the Father of men care for them? O mystery of Providence!

5. And who cares for thousands, myriads, if not millions of the wretched Africans? Are not whole droves of these poor sheep, (human, if not rational beings!) continually driven to market, and sold, like cattle, into the vilest bondage, without any hope of deliverance, but by death? Who cares for those outcasts of men, the well-known Hottentots? It is true, a late writer has taken much pains to represent them as a respectable people. But, from what motive, it is not easy to say; since he himself allows, (a specimen of their elegance of manners,) that the raw guts of sheep and other cattle, is not only some of their choicest food, but also the ornaments of their arms and legs: and, (a specimen of their religion,) that the son is not counted a man, till he has beat his mother almost to death; and when his father grows old, he fastens him in a little hut, and leaves him there to starve! O Father of mercies! are these the works of thy own hands? The purchase of thy Son's blood?

6. How little better is either the civil or religious state of the poor American Indians! that is, the miserable remains of them: for in some provinces not one of them is left to breathe. In Hispaniola, when the Christians came thither first, there were three million of inhabitants. Scarce twelve thousand of them now survive. And in what condition are these, or the other Indians who are still scattered up and down in the vast continent of South or North America? Religion they have none: no public worship of any kind! God is not in all their thoughts. And most of them have no civil government at all; no laws, no magistrates: but every man does what is right in his own eyes: therefore, they are decreasing daily. And very probably, in a century or two, there will not be one of them left.

7. However, the inhabitants of Europe, are not in so deplorable a condition. They are in a state of civilization. They have useful laws, and are governed by magistrates. They have religion. They are Christians. I am afraid, whether they are called Christians or not, many of them have not much religion. What say you to thousands of Laplanders, of Finlanders, Samoiedes, and Greenlanders? indeed, of all who live in high Northern latitudes? Are they as civilized as sheep or oxen? To compare them with horses or any of our domestic animals, would be doing them too much honour. Add to these, the myriads of human savages, that are freezing among the snows of Siberia, and as many, if not more, who are wandering up and down in the deserts of Tartary. Add thousands upon thousands of Poles and Muscovites, and of Christians, so called, from Turkey in Europe. And did "God so love" these, that he gave his Son, his only begotten Son, to the end they might not perish but have everlasting life!" Then why are they thus? O wonder above all wonders!

8. Is there not something equally mysterious in the divine dispensation, with regard to Christianity itself? Who can explain why

Christianity is not spread as far as sin? Why is not the medicine sent to every place where the disease is found? But, alas! it is not: *the sound of it is* not now *gone forth into all lands!* The poison is diffused over the whole globe: the antidote is not known in a sixth part of it. Nay, and how is it, that the wisdom and goodness of God suffer the antidote itself to be so grievously adulterated, not only in Roman Catholic countries, but almost in every part of the Christian world? So adulterated by mixing it frequently with useless, frequently with poisonous ingredients, that it retains none, or, at least, a very small part of its original virtue. Yea, it is so thoroughly adulterated by many of those very persons whom he has sent to administer it, that it adds tenfold malignity to the disease, which it was designed to cure! In consequence of this, there is little more mercy or truth to be found among Christians than among Pagans. Nay, it has been affirmed, and I am afraid, truly, that many called Christians are far worse than the heathens that surround them: more profligate, more abandoned to all manner of wickedness, neither fearing God, nor regarding man! O who can comprehend this? Doth not he that is higher than the highest, regard it?

9. Equally incomprehensible to us are many of the divine dispensations, with regard to particular families. We cannot at all comprehend, why he raises some to wealth, honour, and power; and why, in the mean time, he depresses others, with poverty and various afflictions. Some wonderfully prosper in all they take in hand, and the world pours in upon them; while others, with all their labour and toil, can scarcely procure daily bread. And perhaps prosperity and applause continue with the former to their death; while the latter drink the cup of adversity to their life's end: although no reason appears to us, either for the prosperity of the one, or the adversity of the other.

10. As little can we account for the divine dispensations, with regard to individuals. We know not why the lot of this man is cast in Europe, the lot of that man in the wilds of America: why one is born of rich or noble, the other of poor parents: why the father and mother of one are strong and healthy, those of another weak and diseased; in consequence of which he drags a miserable being all the days of his life, exposed to want, and pain, and a thousand temptations, from which he finds no way to escape. How many are, from their very infancy, hedged in with such relations, that they seem to have no chance, (as some speak,) no possibility of being useful to themselves or others? Why are they, antecedent to their own choice, entangled in such connexions? Why are hurtful people so cast in their way that they know not how to escape them? And why are useful persons hid out of their sight, or snatched away from them at their utmost need? O God, how unsearchable are thy counsels! Too deep to be fathomed by our reason: *and thy ways* of executing those counsels *not to be traced* by our wisdom!

III. 1. Are we able to search out his works of grace any more than his works of Providence? Nothing is more sure than that

"without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Why is it, then, that so vast a majority of mankind are, so far as we can judge, cut off from all means, all possibility of holiness, even from their mother's womb? For instance: what possibility is there that a Hottentot, a New-Zealander, or an inhabitant of Nova-Zembla, if he lives and dies there, should ever know what holiness means; or, consequently, ever attain it? Yea, but one may say, "He sinned before he was born, in a pre-existent state. Therefore, he was placed here, in so unfavourable a situation. And it is mere mercy that he should have a second trial." I answer, Supposing such a pre-existent state, this which you call a second trial, is really no trial at all. As soon as he is born into the world, he is absolutely in the power of his savage parents and relations, who, from the first dawn of reason, train him up in the same ignorance, atheism, and barbarity with themselves. He has no chance, so to speak; he has no possibility of any better education. What trial has he then? From the time he comes into the world, till he goes out of it again, he seems to be under a dire necessity of living in all ungodliness and unrighteousness. But how is this? How can this be the case with so many millions of the souls that God has made? Art thou not "the God of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea?"

2. I desire it may be observed, that if this be improved into an objection against revelation, it is an objection that lies full as much against natural, as revealed religion. If it were conclusive, it would not drive us into Deism, but into flat Atheism. It would conclude, not only against the Christian revelation, but against the being of a God. And yet I see not how we can avoid the force of it, but by resolving all into the unsearchable wisdom of God, together with a deep conviction of our own ignorance and inability to fathom his counsels.

3. Even among us, who are favoured far above these, to whom are intrusted the oracles of God, whose word is a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths, there are still many circumstances in his dispensations which are above our comprehension. We know not why he suffered us so long to go on in our own ways, before we were convinced of sin. Or why he made use of this or the other instrument, and in this or the other manner: and a thousand circumstances attended the process of our conviction, which we do not comprehend. We know not why he suffered us to stay so long, before he revealed his Son in our hearts: or why this change from darkness to light was accompanied with such and such particular circumstances.

4. It is, doubtless, the peculiar prerogative of God, to reserve the *times and seasons in his own power*. And we cannot give any reason, why of two persons equally athirst for salvation, one is presently taken into the favour of God, and the other left to mourn for months or years. One, as soon as he calls upon God, is answered, and filled with peace and joy in believing. Another seeks after him, and, it seems, with the same degree of sincerity and earnestness: and yet

cannot find him, or any consciousness of his favour, for weeks, or months, or years. We know well, this cannot possibly be owing to any absolute decree, consigning one, before he was born, to everlasting glory, and the other to everlasting fire. But we do not know what is the reason for it: it is enough that God knoweth.

5. There is, likewise, great variety in the manner and time of God's bestowing his *sanctifying grace;* whereby he enables his children to give him their whole heart, which we can in nowise account for. We know not why he bestows this on some, even before they ask for it: (some unquestionable instances of which we have seen,) on some, after they had sought it but a few days: and yet permits other believers to wait for it, perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty years: nay, and others, till a few hours, or even minutes, before their spirits return to him. For the various circumstances also, which attend the fulfilling of that great promise, "I will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul," God, undoubtedly, has reasons: but those reasons are generally hid from the children of men. Once more. Some of those who are enabled to love God with all their heart, and with all their soul, retain the same blessing without any interruption, till they are carried to Abraham's bosom. Others do not retain it, although they are not conscious of having breathed the Holy Spirit of God. This also we do not understand: we do not herein "know the mind of the Spirit."

IV. Several valuable lessons we may learn from a deep consciousness of this our own ignorance. First, we may learn hence, a lesson of humility: not to think of ourselves, particularly with regard to our understanding, "more highly than we ought to think;" but "to think soberly:" being thoroughly convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think one good thought: that we should be liable to stumble at every step, to err every moment of our lives, were it not that we have "an anointing from the Holy One," which abideth "with us:" were it not that he who knoweth what is in man, helpeth our infirmities: that "there is a spirit in man which giveth wisdom, and the inspiration of the Holy One which giveth understanding."

From hence we may learn, Secondly, a lesson of faith, of confidence in God. A full conviction of our own ignorance may teach us a full trust in his wisdom. It may teach us, (what is not always so easy as one would conceive it to be,) to trust the invisible God, farther than we can see him! It may assist us in learning that difficult lesson, to "cast down" our own "imaginations," (or *reasonings* rather, as the word properly signifies,) to "cast down every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are, at present, two grand obstructions to our forming a right judgment of the dealings of God with respect to men. The one is, there are innumerable *facts* relating to every man, which we do not and cannot know. They are, at present, hid from us, and covered from our

search by impenetrable darkness. The other is, we cannot see *the thoughts* of men, even when we know their actions. Still we know not their *intentions;* and without this, we can but ill judge of their outward actions. Conscious of this, "judge nothing before the time," concerning his providential dispensations: till he shall bring to light "the hidden things of darkness," and manifest "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

From a consciousness of our ignorance we may learn, Thirdly, a lesson of resignation. We may be instructed to say at all times and in all instances, "Father, not as I will; but as thou wilt." This was the last lesson which our blessed Lord, as man, learned while he was upon earth. He could go no higher than, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," till he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Let us also herein be made conformable to his death, that we may know the full *power of his resurrection.*

SERMON LXXV.

THE CASE OF REASON IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

"*Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*"—1 Cor. xiv. 20.

1. IT is the true remark of an eminent man, who had made many observations on human nature, "If reason be against a man, a man will always be against reason." This has been confirmed by the experience of all ages. Very many have been the instances of it in the Christian, as well as the Heathen world: yea, and that in the earliest times. Even then there were not wanting well-meaning men, who, not having much reason themselves, imagined that reason was of no use in religion: yea, rather, that it was a hinderance to it. And there has not been wanting a succession of men, who have believed and asserted the same thing. But never was there a greater number of these in the Christian Church, at least in Britain, than at this day.

2. Among them that despise and vilify reason, you may always expect to find those enthusiasts, who suppose the dreams of their own imagination to be revelations from God. We cannot expect, that men of this turn will pay much regard to reason. Having an infallible guide, they are very little moved by the reasonings of fallible men. In the foremost of these we commonly find the whole

herd of Antinomians; all that, however they may differ in other respects, agree in *making void the law through faith.* If you oppose reason to these, when they are asserting propositions ever so full of absurdity and blasphemy, they will probably think it a sufficient answer to say, "O, this is your reason!" or, "your carnal reason." So that all arguments are lost upon them: they regard them no more than stubble or rotten wood.

3. How natural is it for those who observe this extreme, to run into the contrary! While they are strongly impressed with the absurdity of undervaluing reason, how apt are they to overvalue it! So much easier it is to run from East to West, than to stop at the middle point! Accordingly we are surrounded with persons, (we find them on every side,) who lay it down as an undoubted principle, that reason is the highest gift of God. They paint it in the fairest colours; they extol it to the skies. They are fond of expatiating in its praise; they make it little less than divine. They are wont to describe it, as very near, if not quite infallible. They look upon it as the all-sufficient director of all the children of men; able, by its native light, to guide them into all truth, and lead them into all virtue.

4. They that are prejudiced against the Christian Revelation, who do not receive the Scriptures as the Oracles of God, almost universally run into this extreme. I have scarcely known any exception: so do all, by whatever name they are called, who deny the Godhead of Christ. Indeed some of these say, they do not deny his Godhead; but only his supreme Godhead. Nay, this is the same thing; for in denying him to be the supreme God, they deny him to be any God at all: unless they will assert that there are two gods, a great one, and a little one! All these are vehement applauders of reason, as the great unerring guide. To these over-valuers of reason we may generally add, men of eminently strong understanding; who, because they do know more than most other men, suppose they can know all things. But we may likewise add, many who are in the other extreme, men of eminently weak understanding; men in whom pride, (a very common case,) supplies the void of sense; who do not suspect themselves to be blind, because they were always so.

5. Is there, then, no medium between these extremes, under-valuing and over-valuing reason? Certainly there is. But who is there to point it out?—to mark down the middle way? That great master of reason, Mr. Locke, has done something of the kind, something applicable to it, in one chapter of his Essay concerning Human Understanding. But it is only remotely applicable to this; he does not come home to the point. The good and great Dr. Watts has wrote admirably well, both concerning reason and faith. But neither does any thing he has written, point out the medium between valuing it too little and too much.

6. I would gladly endeavour, in some degree, to supply this grand defect; to point out, first, to the undervaluers of it, what reason can do; and then to the overvaluers of it, what reason cannot do.

But before either the one or the other can be done, it is abso-

lutely necessary to define the term, to fix the precise meaning of the word in question. Unless this is done, men may dispute to the end of the world, without coming to any good conclusion. This is one great cause of the numberless altercations which have been on the subject. Very few of the disputants thought of this; of defining the word they were disputing about. The natural consequence was, they were just as far from an agreement at the end, as at the beginning.

I. 1. First, then, *reason* is sometimes taken for *argument.* So, "Give me a *reason* for your assertion." So in Isaiah, "Bring forth your strong reasons;" that is, your strong *arguments.* We use the word nearly in the same sense when we say, "He has good *reasons* for what he does." It seems here to mean, He has sufficient *motives;* such as ought to influence a wise man. But how is the word to be understood, in the celebrated question concerning the *reasons of things?* Particularly when it is asked, *An rationes rerum sint æternæ?* Whether the reasons of things are eternal? Do not the *reasons of things* here mean, the *relations* of things to each other? But what are the *eternal relations* of *temporal* things? Of things which did not exist till yesterday? Could the relations of these things exist, before the things themselves had any existence? Is not, then, the talking of such relations, a flat contradiction? Yea, as palpable a one as can be put into words.

2. In another acceptation of the word, reason is much the same with *understanding:* it means a faculty of the human soul: that faculty which exerts itself in three ways, by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind; the first and most simple act of the understanding. *Judgment,* is the determining that the things before conceived either agree with, or differ from each other. *Discourse,* strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind, from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations, I here mean by the term *reason.*

3. Taking the word in this sense, let us now impartially consider, first, What is it that reason can do? And who can deny that it can do much, very much, in the affairs of common life? To begin at the lowest point, it can direct servants how to perform the various works wherein they are employed; to discharge their duty either in the meanest offices, or in any of a higher nature. It can direct the husbandman at what time, and in what manner, to cultivate his ground; to plough, to sow, to reap, to bring in his corn, to breed and manage his cattle, and to act with prudence and propriety in every part of his employment. It can direct artificers how to prepare the various sorts of apparel, and a thousand necessaries and conveniences of life, not only for themselves and their households, but for their neighbours, whether nigh or afar off. It can direct those of higher abilities, to plan and execute works of a more elegant kind. It can direct the painter, the statuary, the musician, to excel in the stations wherein Providence has placed them. It can direct

the mariner to steer his course over the bosom of the great deep. It enables those who study the laws of their country, to defend the property, or life, of their fellow-subjects; and those who study the art of healing, to cure most of the maladies, to which we are exposed in our present state.

4. To ascend higher still; it is certain, reason can assist us in going through the whole circle of arts and sciences: of grammar, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, algebra, metaphysics. It can teach whatever the skill or industry of man has invented for some thousand years. It is absolutely necessary for the due discharge of the most important offices; such as are those of magistrates, whether of an inferior or superior rank; and those of subordinate or supreme governors, whether of states, provinces, or kingdoms.

5. All this, few men in their senses will deny. No thinking man can doubt, but reason is of considerable service, in all things relating to the present world. But suppose we speak of higher things, the things of another world; what can reason do here? Is it a help or a hinderance of religion? It may do much in the affairs of men; but what can it do in the things of God?

6. This is a point that deserves to be deeply considered. If you ask, What can reason do in religion? I answer, It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the foundation of it, and the superstructure.

The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. Now of what excellent use is reason, if we would either understand ourselves, or explain to others, those living Oracles? And how is it possible without it to understand the essential truths contained therein? A beautiful summary of which we have, in that which is called the Apostles' Creed. Is it not reason, (assisted by the Holy Ghost,) which enables us to understand what the Holy Scriptures declare, concerning the being and attributes of God?—concerning his eternity and immensity, his power, wisdom, and holiness? It is by reason that God enables us, in some measure, to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various dispensations, of the old and new covenant, of the law and the gospel. It is by this we understand, (his Spirit opening and enlightening the eyes of our understanding,) what that repentance is, not to be repented of; what is that faith whereby we are saved; what is the nature and the condition of justification; what are the immediate, and what the subsequent fruits of it. By reason we learn what is that new-birth, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven, and what that holiness is, without which no man shall see the Lord. By the due use of reason, we come to know, what are the tempers implied in inward holiness: and what it is to be outwardly holy; holy in all manner of conversation: in other words, What is the mind that was in Christ, and what it is to walk as Christ walked.

7. Many particular cases will occur, with respect to several of the foregoing articles, in which we shall have occasion for all our understanding, if we would keep a conscience void of offence. Many cases of conscience are not to be solved, without the utmost exercise of our reason. The same is requisite in order to understand, and to discharge our ordinary relative duties; the duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, and (to name no more) of masters and servants. In all these respects, and in all the duties of common life, God has given us our reason for a guide. And it is only by acting up to the dictates of it, by using all the understanding which God hath given us, that we can have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

8. Here then there is a large field indeed, wherein reason may expatiate and exercise all its powers. And if reason can do all this, both in civil and religious things, what is it that it cannot do?

We have, hitherto, endeavoured to lay aside all prejudice, and to weigh the matter calmly and impartially. The same course let us take still: let us now coolly consider, without prepossession on any side, what it is, according to the best light we have, that reason cannot do?

II. 1. And, first, reason cannot produce faith. Although it is always consistent with reason, yet reason cannot produce faith, in the scriptural sense of the word. Faith, according to Scripture, is "an evidence or conviction of things not seen." It is a divine evidence, bringing a full conviction of an invisible eternal world. It is true, there was a kind of shadowy persuasion of this, even among the wiser heathens, (probably from tradition, or from some gleams of light, reflected from the Israelites.) Hence many hundreds of years before our Lord was born, the Greek poet uttered that great truth,

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
> Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

But this was little more than faint conjecture. It was far from a firm conviction: which reason, in its highest state of improvement, could never produce in any child of man.

2. Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments, which I could find, either in ancient or modern authors, for the very Being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world; I have wandered up and down musing with myself: What if all these things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What if that melancholy supposition of the old Poet be the real case?

> Οἱη περ φυλλων γενεη, τοιηδε και ἀνδρων·

What if the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves? If the earth drop its successive inhabitants, just as the

tree drops its leaves? What if that saying of a great man be really true,

Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil?
Death is nothing, and nothing is after death?

How am I sure that this is not the case? That I have not followed cunningly devised fables? And I have pursued the thought, till there was no spirit in me, and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life.

3. But in a point of such unspeakable importance, do not depend upon the word of another; but retire for awhile from the busy world, and make the experiment yourself. Try whether *your* reason will give you a clear satisfactory evidence of the invisible world. After the prejudices of education are laid aside, produce your strong reasons for the existence of this. Set them all in array; silence all objections, and put all your doubts to flight. Alas, you cannot, with all your understanding. You may repress them for a season. But how quickly will they rally again, and attack you with redoubled violence! And what can poor reason do for your deliverance? The more vehemently you struggle, the more deeply you are entangled in the toils; and you find no way to escape.

4. How was the case with that great admirer of reason, the author of the maxim above cited? I mean the famous Mr. Hobbes. None will deny that he had a strong understanding. But did it produce in him a full and satisfactory conviction of an invisible world? Did it open the eyes of his understanding, to see

"Beyond the bounds of this diurnal sphere?"

O no! Far from it! His dying words ought never to be forgotten. "Where are you going, Sir," said one of his friends. He answered, "I am taking a leap in the dark;" and died. Just such an evidence of the invisible world can bare reason give to the wisest of men!

5. Secondly, Reason alone cannot produce hope in any child of man: I mean scriptural hope, whereby we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" that hope which St. Paul, in one place, terms, "tasting the powers of the world to come;" in another, the "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That which enables us to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope;—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for us." This hope can only spring from Christian faith: therefore, where there is not faith, there is not hope. Consequently, reason being unable to produce faith, must be equally unable to produce hope. Experience confirms this likewise. How often have I laboured, and that with my might, to beget this hope in myself! But it was lost labour: I could no more acquire this hope of heaven, than I could touch heaven with my hand. And whoever of you makes the same attempt will find it attended with the same success.

I do not deny, that the self-deceiving enthusiast may work in himself a kind of hope. He may work himself up into a lively imagination, into a sort of pleasing dream. He may "compass himself about," as the Prophet speaks, "with sparks of his own kindling." But this cannot be of long continuance, in a little while the bubble will surely break. And what will follow? "This shall ye have at my hand, saith the Lord, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

6. If reason could have produced a hope full of immortality in any child of man, it might have produced it in that great man, whom Justin Martyr scruples not to call "a Christian before Christ." For who that was not favoured with the written word of God, ever excelled, yea, or equalled Socrates? In what other heathen can we find so strong an understanding, joined with so consummate virtue? But had he really this hope? Let him answer for himself. What is the conclusion of that noble apology, which he made before his unrighteous judges? "And now, O Judges! ye are going hence to live; and I am going hence to die. Which of these is best, the gods know; but, I suppose, no man does." No man knows! How far is this from the language of the little Benjamite! "I desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better." And how many thousands are there at this day, even in our own nation, young men and maidens, old men and children, who are able to witness the same good confession?

7. But who is able to do this, by the force of his reason, be it ever so highly improved? One of the most sensible and most amiable heathens that have lived since our Lord died, even though he governed the greatest empire in the world, was the Emperor Adrian. It is a well-known saying of his, "A prince ought to resemble the sun; he ought to shine on every part of his dominion, and to diffuse his salutary rays in every place where he comes." And his life was a comment upon his word: wherever he went he was executing justice and showing mercy. Was not he then at the close of a long life full of immortal hope? We are able to answer this from unquestionable authority, from his own dying words. How inimitably pathetic!

Adriani morientis ad animam suam.

Dying Adrian to his soul:—

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos!

Which the English reader may see translated into our own language, with all the spirit of the original.

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing,
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?

"Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou hop'st, and fear'st, thou know'st not what."

8. Thirdly, Reason, however cultivated and improved, cannot produce the love of God; which is plain from hence: it cannot produce either faith or hope, from which alone this love can flow. It is then only when we "behold," by faith, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," in giving his only Son, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, that "the love of God is shed abroad in our heart, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." It is only then, when "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God," that "we love him, because he first loved us." But what can cold reason do in this matter? It may present us with fair ideas; it can draw a fine picture of love; but this is only a painted fire. And farther than this, reason cannot go. I made the trial for many years. I collected the finest hymns, prayers, and meditations which I could find in any language; and I said, sung, or read them over and over, with all possible seriousness and attention. But still I was like the bones in Ezekiel's vision: "the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them."

9. And as reason cannot produce the love of God, so neither can it produce the love of our neighbour: a calm, generous, disinterested benevolence to every child of man. This earnest, steady good-will to our fellow-creatures, never flowed from any fountain, but gratitude to our Creator. And if this be (as a very ingenious man supposes) the very essence of virtue, it follows that virtue can have no being, unless it spring from the love of God. Therefore, as reason cannot produce this love, so neither can it produce virtue.

10. And as it cannot give either faith, hope, love, or virtue, so it cannot give happiness; since, separate from these, there can be no happiness for any intelligent creature. It is true, those who are void of all virtue, may have pleasures, such as they are; but happiness they have not, cannot have. No:

"Their joy is all sadness; their mirth is all vain;
Their laughter is madness; their pleasure is pain!"

Pleasures! shadows! dreams! fleeting as the wind: unsubstantial as the rainbow! As unsatisfying to the poor, gasping soul,

"As the gay colours of an eastern cloud."

None of these will stand the test of reflection: if thought comes, the bubble breaks.

Suffer me now to add a few plain words, first to you who undervalue reason. Never more declaim in that wild, loose, ranting manner, against this precious gift of God. Acknowledge *the candle of the Lord*, which he hath fixed in our souls for excellent purposes. You see

how many admirable ends it answers, were it only in the things of this life: of what unspeakable use is even a moderate share of reason, in all our wordly employments, from the lowest and meanest offices of life, through all the intermediate branches of business, till we ascend to those that are of the highest importance and the greatest difficulty.

When, therefore, you despise or depreciate reason, you must not imagine you are doing God service; least of all, are you promoting the cause of God, when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion. Unless you wilfully shut your eyes, you cannot but see of what service it is both in laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in raising the superstructure. You see it directs us in every point, both of faith and practice: it guides us with regard to every branch both of inward and outward holiness. Do we not glory in this, that the whole of our religion is a *reasonable service?* Yea, and that every part of it, when it is duly performed, is the highest exercise of our understanding.

Permit me to add a few words to you, likewise, who overvalue reason. Why should you run from one extreme to the other? Is not the middle way best? Let reason do all that reason can: employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love: and, consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness. Expect these from a higher source, even from the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Seek and receive them, not as your own acquisition, but as the gift of God. Lift up your hearts to him who "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." He alone can give that faith which is "the evidence and conviction of things not seen." He alone can "beget you unto a lively hope" of an inheritance eternal in the heavens. And he alone can "shed his love abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto you." Ask, therefore, and it shall be given you: cry unto him, and you shall not cry in vain. How can you doubt? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give the Holy Ghost unto them that ask him?" So shall you be living witnesses, that wisdom, holiness, and happiness, are one, are inseparably united; and are, indeed, the beginning of that eternal life, which God hath given us in his Son.

SERMON LXXVI.

OF GOOD ANGELS.

"*Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?*"—HEBREWS i. 14.

1. MANY of the ancient heathens had (probably from tradition) some notion of good and evil angels. They had some conception of a superior order of beings, between men and God, whom the Greeks generally termed Demons, (*knowing ones,*) and the Romans, Genii. Some of these they supposed to be kind and benevolent, delighting in doing good; others to be malicious and cruel, delighting in doing evil. But their conceptions both of one and the other, were crude, imperfect, and confused; being only fragments of truth, partly delivered down by their forefathers, and partly borrowed from the inspired writings.

2. Of the former, the benevolent kind, seems to have been the celebrated Demon of Socrates, concerning which so many and so various conjectures have been made in succeeding ages. "This gives me notice," said he, "every morning, of any evil which will befall me that day." A late writer, indeed, (I suppose one that hardly believes the existence of either angel or spirit,) has published a dissertation, wherein he labours to prove, that the demon of Socrates was only his reason. But it was not the manner of Socrates to speak in such obscure and ambiguous terms. If he had meant his reason, he would, doubtless, have said so. But this could not be his meaning: for it was impossible his reason should give him notice every morning of every evil which would befall him in that day. It does not lie within the province of reason, to give such notice of future contingencies. Neither does this odd interpretation in any wise agree with the inference which he himself draws from it. "My demon," says he, "did not give me notice this morning of any evil that was to befall me to-day. Therefore, I cannot regard as any evil, my being condemned to die." Undoubtedly it was some spiritual being: probably one of these ministering spirits.

3. An ancient poet, one who lived several ages before Socrates, speaks more determinately on this subject. Hesiod does not scruple to say,

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen."

Hence, it is probable, arose the numerous tales about the exploits of

their demi-gods: *minorum Gentium.* Hence their satyrs, fauns, nymphs of every kind, wherewith they supposed both the sea and land to be filled. But how empty, childish, unsatisfactory, are all the accounts they give of them! as, indeed, accounts that depend upon broken, uncertain tradition can hardly fail to be.

4. Revelation only is able to supply this defect; this only gives us a clear, rational, consistent account of those whom our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard; of both good and evil angels. It is my design to speak, at present, only of the former, of whom we have a full, though brief account in these words: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

I. 1. The question is, according to the manner of the Apostle, equivalent to a strong affirmation. And hence we learn, First, that with regard to their essence or nature, they are all spirits; not material beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us; but having bodies, if any, not gross and earthly like ours, but of a finer substance; resembling fire or flame, more than any other of these lower elements. And is not something like this intimated in those words of the Psalmist, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire?" Psalm civ. 4. As spirits, he has endued them with understanding, will, or affections, (which are, indeed, the same thing, as the affections are only the will exerting itself in various ways,) and liberty. And are not these, understanding, will, and liberty, essential to, if not the essence of a spirit?

2. But who of the children of men can comprehend, what is the *understanding* of an angel? Who can comprehend how far their *sight* extends? Analogous to sight in men, though not the same; but thus we are constrained to speak through the poverty of human language! Probably not only over one hemisphere of the earth, yea, or,

"Tenfold the length of this terrene,"

or even of the Solar System; but so far as to take, in one view, the whole extent of the Creation. And we cannot conceive any defect in their perception, neither any error in their understanding. But in what manner do they use their understanding? We must in no wise imagine, that they creep from one truth to another, by that slow method which we call reasoning. Undoubtedly they see, at one glance, whatever truth is presented to their understanding; and that with all the certainty and clearness, wherewith we mortals see the most self-evident axiom. Who then can conceive the extent of their *knowledge?* Not only of the nature, attributes, and works of God, (whether of creation or Providence,) but of the circumstances, actions, words, tempers, yea, and thoughts of men. For although "God" only "knows the hearts of all men," ("unto whom are known all his works") together with the changes they undergo, "from the beginning of the world;" yet we cannot doubt but his angels know the hearts of those to whom they more immediately

minister. Much less can we doubt of their knowing the thoughts that are in our hearts at any particular time. What should hinder their seeing them as they arise! Not the thin veil of flesh and blood! Can these intercept the view of a spirit? Nay,

> "Walls within walls no more its passage bar,
> Than unopposing space of liquid air."

Far more easily, then, and far more perfectly than we can read a man's thoughts in his face, do these sagacious beings read our thoughts, just as they rise in our hearts; inasmuch as they see the kindred spirit, more clearly than we see the body. If this seem strange to any, who had not averted to it before, let him only consider: Suppose my spirit was out of the body, could not an angel see my thoughts? Even without my uttering any words? (if words are used in the world of spirits.) And cannot that ministering spirit see them just as well now I am in the body? It seems, therefore, to be an unquestionable truth, (although, perhaps, not commonly observed,) that angels know not only the words and actions, but also the thoughts of those to whom they minister. And, indeed, without this knowledge, they would be very ill qualified to perform various parts of their ministry.

3. And what an inconceivable degree of *wisdom* must they have acquired, by the use of their amazing faculties, over and above that with which they were originally endued, in the course of more than six thousand years. (That they have existed so long we are assured; for they "sang together when the foundations of the earth were laid.") How immensely must their wisdom have increased, during so long a period, not only by surveying the hearts and ways of men in their successive generations; but by observing the works of God, his works of Creation, his works of Providence, his works of Grace! And, above all, by "continually beholding the face of their Father which is in heaven."

4. What measures of *holiness*, as well as *wisdom*, have they derived from this inexhaustible ocean!

> "A boundless, fathomless abyss,
> Without a bottom or a shore!"

Are they not hence, by way of eminence, styled *the holy angels?* What goodness, what philanthropy, what love to man, have they drawn from those rivers that are at his right hand! Such as we cannot conceive to be exceeded by any but that of God our Saviour. And they are still drinking in more love from this *Fountain of living Water.*

5. Such is the knowledge and wisdom of the angels of God, as we learn from his own Oracles. Such are their holiness and goodness! And how astonishing is their *strength!* Even a fallen angel is styled by an inspired Writer, "The prince of the power of the air." How terrible a proof did he give of this power, in suddenly raising the

whirlwind, which "smote the four corners of the house," and destroyed all the children of Job at once! (ch. i.) That this was his work, we may easily learn from the command to *save his life*. But he gave a far more terrible proof of his strength, (if we suppose that *messenger of the Lord* to have been an evil angel, as is not at all improbable,) when he smote with death a hundred, fourscore and five thousand Assyrians, in one night, nay, possibly in one hour, if not one moment. Yet a strength abundantly greater than this, must have been exerted by that angel, (whether he was an angel of light or of darkness, which is not determined by the text,) who *smote*, in one hour, "all the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast." For considering the extent of the land of Egypt, the immense populousness thereof, and the innumerable cattle fed in their houses, and grazing in their fruitful fields; the men and beasts who were slain in that night, must have amounted to several millions! And if this be supposed to have been an evil angel, must not a good angel be as strong, yea, stronger than him? For surely any good angel must have more power than even an *Archangel ruined*. And what power must the *four angels* in the Revelation have, who were appointed to "keep the four winds of heaven?" There seems, therefore, no extravagance in supposing, that if God were pleased to permit, any of the angels of light could heave the earth and all the planets out of their orbits; yea, that he could arm himself with all these elements, and crush the whole frame of nature. Indeed we do not know how to set any bounds to the strength of these first-born children of God.

6. And although none but their great Creator is omnipresent; although none beside him can ask, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Yet, undoubtedly, he has given an immense sphere of action (though not unbounded,) to created spirits. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia," mentioned Dan. x. 13, though probably an evil angel, seems to have had a sphere of action, both of knowledge and power, as extensive as that vast empire. And the same, if not greater, we may reasonably ascribe to the good angel, whom he withstood for one and twenty days.

7. The angels of God have great power, in particular over the human body; power either to cause or remove pain and diseases; either to kill or to heal. They perfectly well understand whereof we are made; they know all the springs of this curious machine; and can, doubtless, by God's permission, touch any of them, so as either to stop or restore its motion. Of this power even in an evil angel, we have a clear instance in the case of Job, whom he "smote with sore biles" all over "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." And in that instant, undoubtedly, he would have killed him, if God had not "saved his life." And, on the other hand, of the power of angels to heal, we have a remarkable instance in the case of Daniel. There remained no "strength in me," said the Prophet; "neither was there breath in me." Then one came and touched me, and said, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong." "And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened," ch. x. 17, &c.

On the other hand, when they are commissioned from above, may they not put a period to human life? There is nothing improbable, in what Dr. Parnell supposes the angel to say to the Hermit concerning the death of the child:

> "To all but thee, in fits he seem'd to go.
> And 'twas my ministry, to deal the blow."

From this great truth, the heathen poets probably derived their imagination, that Iris used to be sent down from heaven, to discharge souls out of their bodies. And perhaps the sudden death of many of the children of God, may be owing to the ministry of an angel.

III. So perfectly are the angels of God qualified for their high office. It remains to inquire, How they discharge their office? How do they minister to the heirs of salvation?

1. I will not say that they do not minister at all, to those who, through their obstinate impenitence and unbelief, disinherit themselves of the kingdom. This world is a world of mercy, wherein God pours down many mercies, even on the evil and the unthankful. And many of these, it is very probable, are conveyed even to them, by the ministry of angels: especially, so long as they have any thought of God, or any fear of God before their eyes. But it is their favourite employ, their peculiar office, to minister to the heirs of salvation; to those who are now "saved by faith," or at least, seeking God in sincerity.

2. Is it not their first care to minister to our souls? But we must not expect this will be done *with observation:* in such a manner, as that we may clearly distinguish their working from the workings of our own minds. We have no more reason to look for this, than for their appearing in a visible shape. Without this, they can, in a thousand ways, apply to our understanding. They may assist us in our search after truth, remove many doubts and difficulties, throw light upon what was before dark and obscure, and confirm us in the truth that is after godliness. They may warn us of evil in disguise, and place what is good in a clear, strong light. They may gently move our will, to embrace what is good, and flee from that which is evil. They may, many times, quicken our dull affections, increase our holy hope or filial fear, and assist us more ardently to love *Him*, who has first loved *us*. Yea, they may be sent of God to answer that whole prayer, put into our mouths by pious Bishop Kenn:—

> "O may thy angels while I sleep,
> Around my bed their vigils keep;
> Their love angelical instil;
> Stop every avenue of ill.
> May they celestial joys rehearse,
> And thought to thought with me converse!"

Although the manner of this we shall not be able to explain while we dwell in the body.

3. May they not minister also to us, with respect to our bodies, in

a thousand ways which we do not now understand? They may prevent our falling into many dangers, which we are not sensible of, and may deliver us out of many others, though we know not whence our deliverance comes. How many times have we been strangely and unaccountably preserved, in sudden and dangerous falls! And it is well if we did not impute that preservation to chance, or to our own wisdom or strength. Not so: it was God gave his angels charge over us, and in their hands they bore us up. Indeed, men of the world will always impute such deliverances to accident or second causes. To these, possibly, some of them might have imputed Daniel's preservation in the lions' den. But himself ascribes it to the true cause, "My God has sent his angel, and shut the mouths of the lions." Dan. vi. 22.

4. When a violent disease, supposed incurable, is totally and suddenly removed, it is by no means improbable, that this is effected by the ministry of an angel. And perhaps it is owing to the same cause, that a remedy is unaccountably suggested, either to the sick person, or some attending upon him, by which he is entirely cured.

5. It seems, what are usually called divine dreams, may be frequently ascribed to angels. We have a remarkable instance of this kind related by one, that will hardly be thought an enthusiast; for he was a heathen, a philosopher, and an emperor: I mean Marcus Antoninus. "In his Meditations, he solemnly thanks God for revealing to him, when he was at Cajeta, in a dream, what totally cured the bloody flux, which none of his physicians were able to heal." And why may we not suppose, that God gave him this notice by the ministry of an angel?

6. And how often does God deliver us from evil men, by the ministry of his angels! Overturning whatever their rage, or malice, or subtlety had plotted against us. These are about their bed, and about their path, and privy to all their dark designs; and many of them, undoubtedly, they brought to naught, by means that we think not of. Sometimes, they blast their favourite schemes in the beginning; sometimes, when they are just ripe for execution. And this they can do by a thousand means, that we are not aware of. They can check them in their mid-career, by bereaving them of courage or strength; by striking faintness through their loins, or turning their wisdom into foolishness. Sometimes, they bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and show us the traps that are laid for our feet. In these, and various other ways, they hew the snares of the ungodly in pieces.

7. Another grand branch of their ministry is, to counterwork evil angels; who are continually going about, not only as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour; but more dangerously still, as angels of light, seeking whom they may deceive. And how great is the number of these! Are they not as the stars of heaven for multitude? How great is their subtlety! matured by the experience of above six thousand years. How great is their strength! Only inferior to that of the angels of God. The strongest of the sons of

men, are but as grasshoppers before them. And what an advantage have they over us by that single circumstance, that they are invisible! As we have not strength to repel their force, so we have not skill to decline it. But the merciful Lord hath not given us up to the will of our enemies: "His eyes," that is, his holy angels, "run to and fro over all the earth." And if our eyes were opened, we should see, "they are more that are for us, than they that are against us." We should see,

> ——————"A convoy attends,
> A ministering host of invisible friends."

And whenever those assault us in soul or in body, these are able, willing, ready, to defend us: who are, at least, equally strong, equally wise, and equally vigilant. And who can hurt us, while we have armies of angels, and the God of angels, on our side?

8. And we may make one general observation: whatever assistance God gives to men by men, the same, and frequently in a higher degree, he gives to them by angels. Does he administer to us by men, light, when we are in darkness; joy, when we are in heaviness; deliverance, when we are in danger; ease and health, when we are sick or in pain? It cannot be doubted, but he frequently conveys the same blessings by the ministry of angels: not so sensibly indeed, but full as effectually, though the messengers are not seen. Does he frequently deliver us by means of men, from the violence and subtlety of our enemies? Many times he works the same deliverance by those invisible agents. These shut the mouths of the human lions, so that they have no power to hurt us. And frequently they join with our human friends, (although neither they nor we are sensible of it,) giving them wisdom, courage, or strength, without which all their labour for us would be unsuccessful. Thus do they secretly minister in numberless instances to the heirs of salvation; while we hear only the voices of men, and see none but men round about us.

9. But does not the Scripture teach, "The help which is done upon earth, God doth it himself?" Most certainly he does. And he is able to do it by his own immediate power. He has no need of using any instruments at all, either in heaven or earth. He wants not either angels or men, to fulfil the whole counsel of his will. But it is not his pleasure so to work. He never did, and we may reasonably suppose he never will. He has always wrought by such instruments as he pleases: but still it is God himself that doth the work. Whatever help, therefore, we have, either by angels or men, is as much the work of God, as if he were to put forth his almighty Arm, and work without any means at all. But he has used them from the beginning of the world: in all ages he has used the ministry both of men and angels. And hereby, especially, is seen "the manifold wisdom of God in the church." Meantime the same glory redounds to him as if he used no instruments at all.

10. The grand reason why God is pleased to assist men by men, rather than immediately by himself, is, undoubtedly, to endear us to

each other, by these mutual good offices, in order to increase our happiness, both in time and eternity. And is it not for the same reason, that God is pleased to give his angels charge over us? Namely, that he may endear us and them to each other; that by the increase of our love and gratitude to them, we may find a proportionable increase of happiness, when we meet in our Father's kingdom. In the mean time, though we may not worship them, (worship is due only to our common Creator,) yet we may "esteem them very highly in love, for their works' sake." And we may imitate them in all holiness; suiting our lives to the prayer our Lord himself has taught us; labouring to do his will on earth as angels do it in heaven.

I cannot conclude this discourse better than in that admirable Collect of our Church:—

"O everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful manner; grant that as thy holy angels alway do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON LXXVII.

OF EVIL ANGELS.

"*We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.*"—EPHESIANS vi. 12.

1. IT has been frequently observed, that there are no gaps or chasms in the Creation of God, but that all the parts of it are admirably connected together, to make up one universal whole. Accordingly there is one chain of beings, from the lowest to the highest point, from an unorganized particle of earth or water, to Michael the Archangel. And the scale of creatures does not advance *per saltum*, by leaps, but by smooth and gentle degrees; although it is true these are frequently imperceptible to our imperfect faculties. We cannot, accurately, trace many of the intermediate links of this amazing chain, which are abundantly too fine to be discerned either by our senses or understanding.

2. We can only observe, in a gross and general manner, rising one above another; first, inorganical earth, then minerals and vegetables in their several orders; afterwards, insects, reptiles, fishes,

beasts, men, and angels. Of angels, indeed, we know nothing with any certainty but by Revelation. The accounts which are left by the wisest of the ancients, or given by the modern heathens, being no better than silly, self-inconsistent fables, too gross to be imposed even upon children. But by divine Revelation we are informed, that they were all created holy and happy; yet they did not all continue as they were created: some kept, but some left their first estate. The former of these are now good angels, the latter, evil angels. Of the former, I have spoken in the preceding discourse; I purpose now to speak of the latter. And highly necessary it is, that we should well understand what God has revealed concerning them, that they may gain no advantage over us by our own ignorance; that we may know how to wrestle against them effectually. For "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places."

3. This single passage seems to contain the whole scriptural doctrine concerning evil angels. I apprehend the plain meaning of it, literally translated, is this, *our wrestling;* the wrestling of real Christians, *is not*, only, or chiefly, *against flesh and blood*, weak men, or fleshly appetites and passions, *but against principalities, against powers*,—the mighty *princes* of all the infernal regions, with their combined forces: and great is their *power*, as is also the power of the legions they command; *against the rulers of the world;* (this is the literal meaning of the word.) Perhaps these principalities and powers remain chiefly in the citadel of their kingdom. But there are other evil spirits that range abroad, to whom the provinces of the world are committed;—*Of the darkness*, chiefly the spiritual darkness, *of this age*, which prevails during the present state of things: *against wicked spirits;* eminently such, who mortally hate, and continually oppose holiness, and labour to infuse unbelief, pride, evil desire, malice, anger, hatred, envy, or revenge;—*in heavenly places*, which were once their abode, and which they still aspire after.

In prosecuting this important subject, I will endeavour to explain,

I. The Nature and Properties of Evil Angels: And,

II. Their Employment.

I. 1. With regard to the first, we cannot doubt, but all the angels of God were originally of the same *nature*. Unquestionably they were the highest order of created beings. They were spirits, pure, ethereal creatures, simple and incorruptible; if not wholly immaterial, yet certainly not encumbered with gross, earthly flesh and blood. As spirits, they were endued with understanding, with affections, and with liberty, or a power of self-determination: so that it lay in themselves, either to continue in their allegiance to God, or to rebel against him.

2. And their original *properties* were, doubtless, the same with those of the holy angels. There is no absurdity in supposing Satan, their chief, otherwise styled "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," to have been, at least, "one of the first, if not the first Archangel." Like the other

sons of the morning, they had a height and depth of understanding quite incomprehensible to us. In consequence of this, they had such knowledge and wisdom, that the wisest of the children of men, (had men then existed,) would have been mere idiots in comparison of them. Their strength was equal to their knowledge, such as it cannot enter into our heart to conceive: neither can we conceive to how wide a sphere of action, either their strength or their knowledge extended. Their number God alone can tell: doubtless it was only less than infinite. And a third part of these stars of heaven the arch-rebel drew after him.

3. We do not exactly know, (because it is not revealed in the Oracles of God,) either what was the occasion of their apostacy, or what effect it immediately produced upon them. Some have, not improbably, supposed, that when God *published the decree*, (mentioned Psalm ii. 6, 7,) concerning the kingdom of his only begotten Son, to be over all creatures: these first-born of creatures gave place to pride, comparing themselves to him; (possibly intimated by the very name of Satan, Lucifer, or Michael, which means, *Who is like God?*) It may be, Satan then first giving way to temptation, said in his heart, "I too will have my throne. I will sit upon the sides of the North! I will be like the Most High." But how did the mighty then fall! What an amazing loss did they sustain! If we allow of them all, what our Poet supposes concerning their chief in particular,

> ——— "His form had not yet lost
> All its original brightness, nor appear'd
> Less than Archangel ruin'd, and the excess
> Of glory obscur'd:"

If we suppose their outward form was not entirely changed, (though it must have been in a great degree: because the evil disposition of the mind must dim the lustre of the visage,) yet what an astonishing change was wrought within, when angels became devils! when the holiest of all the creatures of God became the most unholy!

4. From the time that they shook off their allegiance to God, they shook off all goodness, and contracted all those tempers which are most hateful to him, and most opposite to his nature. And ever since they are full of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, exalting themselves above measure: and although so deeply depraved through their inmost frame, yet admiring their own perfections. They are full of envy, if not against God himself; (and even that is not impossible, seeing they formerly aspired after his throne;) yet against all their fellow-creatures: against the angels of God, who now enjoy the heaven from which they fell: and much more against those worms of the earth, who are now called to "inherit the kingdom." They are full of cruelty, of rage against all the children of men, whom they long to inspire with the same wickedness with themselves, and to involve in the same misery.

5. In the prosecution of this infernal design, they are diligent in the highest degree. To find out the most effectual means of putting

it into execution, they apply, to this end, the whole force of their angelical understanding. And they second it with their whole strength, so far as God is pleased to permit. But it is well for mankind, that God hath set them their bounds which they cannot pass. He hath said to the fiercest and strongest of the apostate spirits, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." Otherwise how easily and how quickly might one of them overturn the whole frame of nature! How soon would they involve all in one common ruin, or, at least, destroy man from the face of the earth! And they are indefatigable in their bad work: they never are faint or weary. Indeed it seems, no spirits are capable of weariness but those that inhabit flesh and blood.

6. One circumstance more we may learn from the Scripture concerning the evil angels. They do not wander at large, but are all united under one common head. It is he that is styled by our blessed Lord, "The prince of this world:" yea, the Apostle does not scruple to call him, "The god of this world." He is frequently styled Satan, the adversary; being the great adversary both to God and man. He is termed, "The Devil;"—by way of eminence, "Apollyon," or the Destroyer;—"The Old Serpent," from his beguiling Eve under that form;—and "The Angel of the bottomless pit." We have reason to believe that the other evil angels are under his command; that they are arranged by him according to their several orders, that they are appointed to their several stations, and have, from time to time, their several works and offices assigned them. And, undoubtedly, they are connected, (though we know not how; certainly not by love,) both to him and to each other.

II. But what is the employment of evil angels? This is the second point to be considered.

1. They are (remember! so far as God permits) κοσμοκρατορες, "Governors of the world!" So that there may be more ground than we are apt to imagine, for that strange expression of Satan, (Matt. vi. 8, 9,) when he showed our Lord "all the kindoms of the world, and the glory of them;" "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is a little more particularly expressed in the fourth chapter of St. Luke, "The devil showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." (Such an astonishing measure of power is still left in the prince of darkness!) "And the devil said, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it." ver. 5, 6. They are "the rulers of the darkness of this age," (so the words are literally translated,) of the present state of things, during which "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." He is the element of the children of men, only those who fear God being excepted. He and his angels, in connexion with, and in subordination to him, dispose all the ignorance, all the error, all the folly, and particularly all the wickedness of men, in such a manner as may most hinder the kingdom of God, and most advance the kingdom of darkness.

2. "But has every man a particular evil angel, as well as a good one attending him?" This has been an exceeding ancient opinion both among the Christians, and the Jews before them. But it is much doubted, whether it can be sufficiently proved from Scripture. Indeed it would not be improbable, that there is a particular evil angel with every man, if we were assured there is a good one. But this cannot be inferred from those words of our Lord concerning little children, "In heaven their angels do continually see the face of their Father which is in heaven." This only proves, that there are angels which are appointed to take care of little children. It does not prove, that a particular angel is allotted to every child. Neither is it proved by the words of Rhoda, who, hearing the voice of Peter, said, "It is his angel." We cannot infer any more from this, even suppose *his angel* means his guardian angel, than that Rhoda believed the doctrine of guardian angels, which was then common among the Jews. But still it will remain a disputable point, (seeing Revelation determines nothing concerning it,) whether every man is attended either by a particular good, or a particular evil angel.

3. But whether or not particular men are attended by particular evil spirits, we know that Satan and all his angels are continually warring against us, and watching over every child of man. They are ever watching to see whose outward or inward circumstances, whose prosperity or adversity, whose health or sickness, whose friends or enemies, whose youth or age, whose knowledge or ignorance, whose blindness or idleness, whose joy or sorrow, may lay them open to temptation. And they are perpetually ready to make the utmost advantage of every circumstance. These skilful wrestlers espy the smallest slip we make, and avail themselves of it immediately; as they also are about our bed, and about our path, and spy out all our ways." Indeed each of them "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, or whom he may "beguile through his subtlety, as the serpent beguiled Eve." Yea, and in order to do this the more effectually, they transform themselves into angels of light. Thus:

> "With rage that never ends,
> Their hellish arts they try:
> Legions of dire, malicious fiends,
> And spirits enthron'd on high."

4. It is by these instruments chiefly that the *foolish hearts* of those that know not God *are darkened:* yea, they frequently darken, in a measure, the hearts of them that do know God. The god of this world knows how to blind our hearts, to spread a cloud over our understanding, and to obscure the light of those truths, which, at other times, shine as bright as the noon-day sun. By this means he assaults our faith, our evidence of things unseen. He endeavours to weaken that hope full of immortality to which God hath begotten us, and thereby to lessen, if he cannot destroy, our joy in God our Saviour. But, above all, he strives to damp our love of God, as he

knows this is the spring of all our religion; and that, as this rises or falls, the work of God flourishes or decays in the soul.

5. Next to the love of God, there is nothing which Satan so cordially abhors as the love of our neighbour. He uses, therefore, every possible means to prevent or destroy this; to excite either private or public suspicions, animosities, resentment, quarrels: to destroy the peace of families or of nations, and to banish unity and concord from the earth. And this, indeed, is the triumph of his art; to imbitter the poor, miserable children of men against each other, and, at length, urge them to do his own work; to plunge one another into the pit of destruction.

6. This enemy of all righteousness is equally diligent to hinder every good word and work. If he cannot prevail upon us to do evil, he will, if possible, prevent our doing good. He is peculiarly diligent to hinder the work of God from spreading in the hearts of men. What pains does he take, to prevent or obstruct the general work of God! And how many are his devices to stop its progress in particular souls! To hinder their continuing or growing in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! To lessen, if not destroy, that love, joy, peace; that long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; that fidelity, meekness, and temperance, which our Lord works, by his loving Spirit, in them that believe, and wherein the very essence of religion consists.

7. To effect these ends, he is continually labouring with all his skill and power, to infuse evil thoughts of every kind into the hearts of men. And certainly it is as easy for a spirit to speak to our heart, as for a man to speak to our ears. But sometimes it is exceedingly difficult to distinguish these from our own thoughts; those which he injects so exactly resembling those which naturally arise in our own minds. Sometimes, indeed, we may distinguish one from the other by this circumstance. The thoughts which naturally arise in our minds, are generally, if not always, occasioned by, or at least, connected with, some inward or outward circumstance that went before. But those that are preternaturally suggested, have, frequently, no relation to, or connexion, (at least, none that we are able to discern,) with any thing which preceded. On the contrary, they shoot in, as it were, across; and thereby show, that they are of a different growth.

8. He likewise labours to awaken evil passions or tempers in our souls. He endeavours to inspire those passions and tempers, which are directly opposite to the "fruit of the Spirit." He strives to instil unbelief, atheism, ill-will, bitterness, hatred, malice, envy; opposite to faith and love: fear, sorrow, anxiety, worldly care; opposite to peace and joy: impatience, ill-nature, anger, resentment; opposite to long-suffering, gentleness, meekness: fraud, guile, dissimulation; contrary to fidelity: love of the world, inordinate affection, foolish desires; opposite to the love of God. One sort of evil desires he may probably raise or inflame, by touching the springs of

this animal machine. Endeavouring thus, by means of the body, to disturb or sully the soul.

9. And, in general, we may observe, that as no good is done, or spoken, or thought by any man, without the assistance of God, working together *in* and *with* those that believe in him: so there is no evil done, or spoken, or thought, without the assistance of the devil, "who worketh with energy," with strong, though secret power, "in the children of unbelief." Thus he *entered into* Judas, and confirmed him in the design of betraying his Master. Thus he "put it in the heart" of Ananias and Sapphira "to lie unto the Holy Ghost." And in like manner he has a share in all the actions, and words, and designs of evil men. As the children of God are "workers together with God," in every good thought, or word, or action; so the children of the devil are workers together with him, in every evil thought, or word, or work. So that as all good tempers, and, remotely, all good words and actions are the fruit of the good Spirit; in like manner, all evil tempers, with all the words and works which spring from them, are the fruit of the evil spirit; insomuch that all the *works of the flesh*, of our evil nature, are likewise the *work of the devil*.

10. On this account, because he is continually inciting men to evil, he is emphatically called *the Tempter*. Nor is it only with regard to his own children, that he is thus employed. He is continually tempting the children of God also, and those that are labouring so to be.

> "A constant watch he keeps;
> He eyes them night and day;
> He never slumbers, never sleeps,
> Lest he should lose his prey."

Indeed the holiest of men, as long as they remain upon earth, are not exempt from his temptations. They cannot expect it: seeing "it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master." And we know he was tempted to evil till he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

11. For such is the malice of the wicked one, that he will torment whom he cannot destroy. If he cannot entice men to sin, he will, (so far as he is permitted,) put them to pain. There is no doubt but he is the occasion, directly or indirectly, of many of the pains of mankind, which those who can no otherwise account for them, lightly pass over as *nervous*. And innumerable *accidents*, as they are called, are, undoubtedly, owing to his agency: such as the unaccountable fright or falling of horses, the overturning of carriages, the breaking or dislocating of bones; the hurt done by the falling or burning of houses, by storms of wind, snow, rain, or hail; by lightning or earthquakes. But to all these, and a thousand more, this subtle spirit can give the appearance of *accidents*: for fear the sufferers, if they knew the real agents, should call for help on one that is stronger than he.

12. There is little reason to doubt but many diseases, likewise, both of the acute and chronical kind, are either occasioned or in-

creased by diabolical agency: particularly those that begin in an instant, without any discernible cause, as well as those that continue, and perhaps gradually increase, in spite of all the power of medicine. Here, indeed, *vain men* that *would be wise*, again call in the nerves to their assistance. But is not this explaining *ignotum per ignotius?* A thing unknown by what is more unknown? For what do we know of the nerves themselves? not even whether they are solid or hollow!

13. Many years ago, I was asking an experienced physician, and one particularly eminent for curing lunacy, "Sir, have you not seen reason to believe, that some lunatics are really demoniacs?" He answered, "Sir, I have been often inclined to think, that most lunatics are demoniacs. Nor is there any weight in that objection, that they are frequently cured by medicine. For so might any other disease, occasioned by an evil spirit, if God did not suffer him to repeat the stroke, by which that disease is occasioned."

14. This thought opens to a wider scene. Who can tell how many of those diseases, which we impute altogether to natural causes, may be really preternatural? What disorder is there in the human frame, which an evil angel may not inflict? Cannot he smite us, as he did Job, and that in a moment, with biles from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? Cannot he, with equal ease, inflict any other, either external or internal malady? Could not he, in a moment, by divine permission, cast the strongest man down to the ground, and make him *wallow*, *foaming*, with all the symptoms either of an epilepsy, or apoplexy? In like manner, it is easy for him to smite any one man, or every one in a city or nation, with a malignant fever, or with the plague itself, so that vain would be the help of man.

15. But that malice blinds the eyes of the wise, one would imagine so intelligent a being would not stoop so low, as, it seems, the devil sometimes does, to torment the poor children of men! For to him we may reasonably impute many little inconveniences which we suffer. "I believe, (said that excellent man, the Marquis de Renty, when the bench snapped in sunder without any visible cause,) that Satan had a hand in it, making me to fall untowardly." I know not whether he may not have a hand in that unaccountable horror, with which many have been seized in the dead of night, even to such a degree, that all their bones have shook. Perhaps he has a hand, also, in those terrifying dreams which many have, even while they are in perfect health.

It may be observed, in all these instances, we usually say *the Devil*, as if there was one only; because these spirits, innumerable as they are, do all act in concert: and because we know not, whether one or more are concerned in this or that work of darkness.

It remains only to draw a few plain inferences from the doctrine which has been delivered.

1. And first, as a general preservative against all the rage, the power, and subtlety of your great adversary, *put on the panoply*, the

whole armour *of God*, universal holiness. See that "the mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," and that ye "walk as Christ also walked;" that ye have a conscience void of offence, toward God and men. So shall ye be "able to withstand" all the force and all the stratagems of the enemy. So shall ye be able to "withstand in the evil day," in the day of sore temptation. And "having done all, to stand;" to remain in the posture of victory and triumph.

2. To his *fiery darts*, his evil suggestions of every kind, blasphemous or unclean, though numberless as the stars of heaven, oppose *the shield of faith;* a consciousness of the love of Christ Jesus will effectually quench them all.

"Jesus hath died for *you!*
What can your faith withstand?
Believe, hold fast your shield! and who
Shall pluck you from his hand?"

3. If he inject doubts, whether you are a child of God; or fears, lest you should not endure to the end, "take to you for a helmet, the hope of salvation." Hold fast that glad word, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." You will never be overthrown, you will never be staggered by your adversary, if you "hold fast the beginning of this confidence steadfast unto the end."

4. Whenever the "roaring lion, walking about, and seeking whom he may devour," assaults you with all his malice, and rage, and strength, *resist* him *steadfast in the faith.* Then is the time, having cried to the strong for strength, to "stir up the gift of God that is in you:" to summon all your faith, and hope, and love, to turn the attack in the Name of the Lord, and in the power of his might: and *he will* soon *flee from you.*

5. But "there is no temptation," says one, "greater than the being without temptation." When, therefore, this is the case, when Satan seems to be withdrawn, then beware, lest he hurt you more as a crooked serpent, than he could do as a roaring lion. Then take care you are not lulled into a pleasing slumber, lest he should beguile you as he did Eve, even in innocence, and insensibly draw you from your simplicity toward Christ; from seeking all your happiness in him.

6. Lastly, if he "transform himself into an angel of light," then are you in the greatest danger of all. Then have you need to beware, lest you also fall, where many mightier have been slain: then have you the greatest need to "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And if you continue so to do, the God whom you love and serve will deliver you. "The anointing of the Holy One shall abide with you, and teach you of all things." Your eye will pierce through snares: you shall "know what that holy and acceptable will of God is," and shall hold on your way, till you "grow up in all things into him that is our Head, even Christ Jesus."

SERMON LXXVIII.

OF HELL.

"*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*"—Mark ix. 48.

1. EVERY truth which is revealed in the oracles of God, is, undoubtedly, of great importance. Yet it may be allowed, that some of those which are revealed therein, are of greater importance than others; as being more immediately conducive to the grand end of all, the eternal salvation of men. And we may judge of their importance, even from this circumstance, that they are not mentioned once only in the sacred writings, but are repeated over and over. A remarkable instance of this we have, with regard to the awful truth which is now before us. Our blessed Lord, who uses no superfluous words, who makes no *vain repetitions*, repeats it over and over in the same chapter, and, as it were, in the same breath. So, verse 43, 44, "If thy hand offend thee," if a thing or person as useful as a hand, be an occasion of sin, and there is no other way to shun that sin, "cut it off. It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell: into unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." So again, ver. 45, 46, "If thy foot offend thee, cut it off.—It is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell: into unquenchable fire, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." And yet again, ver. 47, 48, "If thine eye," a person or thing as dear as thine eye, "offend thee," hinder thy running the race which is set before thee, "pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

2. And let it not be thought, that the consideration of these terrible truths, is proper only for enormous sinners. How is this supposition consistent with what our Lord speaks to those who were then, doubtless, the holiest men upon earth? "When innumerable multitudes were gathered together, he said to his disciples, (the Apostles) "First of all, I say unto you, my friends, Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do: but I say unto you, fear him, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him!" Luke xii. 1—5. Yea, fear him under this very notion, of having power to cast into hell: that is, in

effect, fear, lest he should cast you into the place of torment. And this very fear, even in the children of God, is one excellent means of preserving them from it.

3. It behooves, therefore, not only the outcasts of men, but even *you, his friends;* you that fear and love God, deeply to consider what is revealed in the Oracles of God, concerning the future state of punishment. How widely distant is this from the most elaborate accounts which are given by the Heathen authors! Their accounts are (in many particulars at least) childish, fanciful, and self-inconsistent. So that it is no wonder, they did not believe themselves, but only related the tales of the vulgar. So Virgil strongly intimates, when, after the laboured account he had given of the shades beneath, he sends him that had related it, out at the ivory-gate, through which (as he tells us) only *dreams* pass: thereby giving us to know, that all the preceding account is no more than a dream. This he only insinuates; but his brother poet Juvenal, speaks out flat and plain.

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum æra lavantur.

"Even our children do not believe a word of the tales concerning another world."

4. Here, on the contrary, all is worthy of GOD, the Creator, the Governor of mankind. All is awful and solemn; suitable to his wisdom and justice, by whom *Tophet was ordained of old:* although originally *prepared*, not for the children of men, but "for the devil and his angels."

The punishment of those who, in spite of all the warnings of God, resolve to have their portion with the devil and his angels, will, according to the ancient, and not improper division, be either, *Pœna damni*, what they lose, or, *Pœna sensus*, what they feel. After considering these separately, I shall touch on a few additional circumstances, and conclude with two or three inferences.

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the *Pœna damni*, the punishment of loss. This commences in that very moment, wherein the soul is separated from the body; in that instant, the soul loses all those pleasures, the enjoyment of which depends on the outward senses. The smell, the taste, the touch, delight no more: the organs that ministered to them are spoiled, and the objects that used to gratify them, are removed far away. In the dreary regions of the dead, all these things are forgotten: or, if remembered, are only remembered with pain, seeing they are gone for ever. All the pleasures of the imagination are at an end. There is no grandeur in the infernal regions; there is nothing beautiful in those dark abodes; no light but that of livid flames. And nothing new, but one unvaried scene of horror upon horror! There is no music but that of groans and shrieks, of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; of curses and blasphemies against God, or cutting reproaches of one another. Nor is there any thing to gratify the sense of honour: No; they are the heirs of shame and everlasting contempt.

2. Thus are they totally separated from all the *things* they were fond of in the present world. At the same instant will commence another loss; that of all the *persons* whom they loved. They are torn away from their nearest and dearest relations, their wives, husbands, parents, children, and (what to some will be worse than all this) the friend which was as their own soul. All the pleasures they ever enjoyed in these is lost, gone, vanished away. For there is no friendship in hell. Even the poet who affirms, (though I know not on what authority,)

> ——"Devil with devil damn'd
> Firm concord holds:"

Does not affirm that there is any concord among the human fiends, that inhabit the great abyss.

3. But they will then be sensible of a greater loss, than all they have enjoyed on earth. They have lost their place in Abraham's bosom, in the paradise of God. Hitherto, indeed, it hath not entered into their hearts to conceive, what holy souls enjoy in the garden of God, in the society of angels, and of the wisest and best men that have lived from the beginning of the world: (not to mention the immense increase of knowledge which they will then, undoubtedly, receive.) But they will then fully understand the value of what they have vilely cast away.

4. But as happy as the souls in paradise are, they are preparing for far greater happiness. For paradise is only the porch of heaven; and it is there the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is in heaven only, that there is the fulness of joy, the pleasures that are at God's right-hand for evermore. The loss of this, by those unhappy spirits, will be the completion of their misery. They will then know and feel, that God alone is the centre of all created spirits: and consequently that a spirit made for God, can have no rest out of him. It seems that the Apostle had this in his view when he spoke of those "who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." Banishment from the presence of the Lord, is the very essence of destruction to a spirit that was made for God. And if that banishment last for ever, it is *everlasting destruction.*

Such is the loss sustained by those miserable creatures, on whom that awful sentence will be pronounced, "Depart from me, ye cursed!" What an unspeakable curse, if there were no other! But, alas!—this is far from being the whole: for to the punishment of *loss*, will be added the punishment of *sense*. What they lose, implies unspeakable misery, which yet is inferior to what they feel. This it is, which our Lord expresses in those emphatical words, "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

II. 1. From the time that sentence was pronounced upon man, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," it was the custom of all nations, so far as we can learn, to commit dust to dust: it seemed natural to restore the bodies of the dead to the general

mother earth. But, in process of time, another method obtained, chiefly among the rich and great, of burning the bodies of their relations, and frequently in a grand magnificent manner. For which purpose they erected huge funeral piles, with immense labour and expense. By either of these methods the body of man was soon restored to its parent dust. Either the worm or the fire soon consumed the well-wrought frame; after which, the worm itself quickly died, and the fire was entirely quenched. But there is, likewise, a worm that belongs to the future state, a worm that never dieth. And there is a fire hotter than that of the funeral pile; and it is a fire that will never be quenched.

2. The first thing intended by the worm that never dieth, seems to be a guilty conscience, including self-condemnation, sorrow, shame, remorse, and a sense of the wrath of God. May not we have some conception of this, by what is sometimes felt even in the present world? Is it not of this, chiefly, that Solomon speaks, when he says, "The spirit of a man may bear his infirmities," his infirmities or griefs of any other kind: "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Who can bear the anguish of an awakened conscience, penetrated with a sense of guilt, and the arrows of the Almighty sticking in the soul, and drinking up the spirit! How many of the stout-hearted have sunk under it, and chose strangling rather than life? And yet what are these wounds, what is all this anguish of a soul while in this present world, in comparison of those they must suffer when their souls are wholly awakened, to feel the wrath of an offended God! Add to these, all unholy passions, fear, horror, rage, evil desires, desires that can never be satisfied. Add all unholy tempers; envy, jealousy, malice, and revenge; all of which will incessantly gnaw the soul, as the vulture was supposed to do the liver of Tityus. To these if we add hatred of God, and all his creatures; all these united together may serve to give us some little imperfect idea of the worm that never dieth.

3. We may observe a remarkable difference in the manner wherein our Lord speaks concerning the two parts of the future punishment. He says, "Where *their* worm dieth not," of the one; "where *the* fire is not quenched," of the other. This cannot be by chance. What then is the reason for this variation of the expression?

Does it seem to be this? *The fire* will be the same, essentially the same, to all that are tormented therein: only, perhaps, more intense to some than others, according to their degree of guilt. But *their worm* will not, cannot be the same. It will be infinitely varied, according to their various kinds, as well as degrees of wickedness. This variety will arise partly from the just judgment of God, "rewarding every man according to his works." For we cannot doubt but this rule will take place, no less in hell than in heaven. As in heaven, *every man shall receive his own reward*, incommunicably his, that is, the whole tenor of his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions: so, undoubtedly, every man, in fact, will receive his own bad reward, according to his own bad labour. And this, likewise,

will be incommunicably *his own*, even as his labour was. Variety of punishment will, likewise, arise from the very nature of the thing. As they that bring most holiness to heaven, will find most happiness there; so, on the other hand, it is not only true, that the more wickedness a man brings to hell, the more misery he will find there; but that this misery will be infinitely varied according to the various kinds of his wickedness. It was, therefore, proper to say, *the fire*, in general; but *their worm* in particular.

4. But it has been questioned by some, "Whether there be any fire in hell?" That is, "any material fire." Nay, if there be any fire, it is, unquestionably, material. For what is immaterial fire? The same as immaterial water or earth! Both the one and the other is absolute nonsense; a contradiction in terms. Either, therefore, we must affirm it to be material, or we deny its existence. But if we granted them there is no fire at all there, what would they gain thereby? Seeing this is allowed, on all hands, that it is either fire or something worse. And consider this: does not our Lord speak, *as if* it were real fire? No one can deny or doubt of this. Is it possible then to suppose, that the God of truth would speak in this manner, if it were not so? Does he design to fright his poor creatures? What, with scare-crows? With vain shadows of things that have no being? O let not any one think so! Impute no such folly to the Most High!

5. But others aver, "It is not possible that fire should burn always. For by the immutable law of nature, it consumes whatever is thrown into it. And, by the same law, as soon as it has consumed its fuel, it is itself consumed, it goes out."

It is most true, that in the present constitution of things, during the present laws of nature, the element of fire does dissolve and consume whatever is thrown into it. But here is the mistake: the present laws of nature are not immutable. When the heavens and the earth shall flee away, the present scene will be totally changed: and with the present constitution of things, the present laws of nature will cease. After this great change, nothing will be dissolved, nothing will be consumed any more. Therefore, if it were true, that fire consumes all things now, it would not follow that it would do the same after the whole frame of nature has undergone that vast, universal change.

6. I say, If it were true, that "fire consumes *all things* now." But, indeed, it is not true. Has it not pleased God, to give us already some proof of what will be hereafter? Is not the Linum Asbestum, the incombustible flax, known in most parts of Europe? If you take a towel or handkerchief made of this, (one which may now be seen in the British Museum,) you may throw it into the hottest fire, and when it is taken out again, it will be observed, upon the nicest experiment, not to have lost one grain of its weight. Here, therefore, is a substance before our eyes, which even in the present constitution of things, (as if it were an emblem of things to come,) may remain in fire without being consumed.

7. Many writers have spoken of other bodily torments added to the being cast into the lake of fire. One of these, even pious Kempis, supposes that Misers, for instance, have melted gold poured down their throats: and he supposes many other particular torments, to be suited to men's particular sins. Nay, our great poet himself supposes the inhabitants of hell to undergo a variety of tortures: not to continue always in the lake of fire, but to be frequently,

"By harpy-footed furies, hauled,"

into regions of ice: and then back again through

"Extremes, by change, more fierce."

But I find no word, no tittle of this, not the least hint of it in all the Bible. And surely this is too awful a subject, to admit of such play of imagination. Let us keep to the written word. It is torment enough, to dwell with everlasting burnings.

8. This is strongly illustrated by a fabulous story, taken from one of the Eastern writers, concerning a Turkish King, who, after he had been guilty of all manner of wickedness, once did a good thing: for seeing a poor man falling into a pit, wherein he must have inevitably perished, and kicking him from it, he saved his life. The story adds, that when, for his enormous wickedness, he was cast into hell, that foot wherewith he had saved the man's life, was permitted to lie out of the flames. But allowing this to be a real case, what a poor comfort would it be? What if both feet were permitted to lie out of the flames, yea, and both hands, how little would it avail? Nay, if all the body were taken out, and placed where no fire touched it, and only one hand or one foot kept in a burning fiery furnace; would the man, mean time, be much at ease? Nay, quite the contrary. Is it not common to say to a child, "Put your finger into that candle: can you bear it even for one minute? How then will you bear hell-fire?" Surely it would be torment enough to have the flesh burnt off from only one finger. What then will it be, to have the whole body plunged into a lake of fire burning with brimstone!

III. It remains now only to consider two or three circumstances attending the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire.

1. And, first, consider the company wherewith every one is surrounded in that place of torment. It is not uncommon to hear even condemned criminals, in our public prisons say, "O! I wish I was hanged out of the way, rather than to be plagued with these wretches that are round about me." But what are the most abandoned wretches upon earth, compared to the inhabitants of hell! None of these are, as yet, perfectly wicked, emptied of every spark of good: certainly not till this life is at an end; probably not till the day of judgment. Nor can any of these exert, without control, their whole wickedness on their fellow-creatures. Sometimes they are restrained by good men: sometimes even by bad. So even the tortures in the Romish Inquisition are restrained by those that employ them, when they

suppose the sufferer cannot endure any more. They then order the executioner to forbear: because it is contrary to the rules of the house, that a man should die upon the rack. And very frequently, when there is no human help, they are restrained by God, who hath set them their bounds, which they cannot pass, and saith, "Hitherto shall ye come, and no farther." Yea, so mercifully hath God ordained, that the very extremity of pain causes a suspension of it. The sufferer faints away, and so (for a time at least) sinks into insensibility. But the inhabitants of hell are perfectly wicked, having no spark of goodness remaining. And they are restrained by none from exerting to the uttermost their total wickedness. Not by men: none will be restrained from evil by his companions in damnation. And not by God; for he hath forgotten them, he hath delivered them over to the tormentors. And the devils need not fear, like their instruments upon earth, lest they should expire under the torture. They can die no more: they are strong to sustain, whatever the united malice, skill, and strength of angels can inflict upon them. And their angelic tormentors have time sufficient to vary their torments a thousand ways. How infinitely may they vary one single torment: Horrible appearances! Whereby, there is no doubt, an evil spirit, if permitted, could terrify the stoutest man upon earth to death.

2. Consider, Secondly, that all these torments of body and soul, are without intermission. They have no respite from pain; but "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up day and night." Day and night! That is, speaking according to the constitution of the present world; wherewith God has wisely and graciously ordained, that day and night should succeed each other: so that in every four and twenty hours there comes a

> "Daily Sabbath, made to rest
> Toiling man and weary beast."

Hence we seldom undergo much labour, or suffer much pain, before

> "Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

steals upon us by insensible degrees, and brings an interval of ease. But although the damned have uninterrupted night, it brings no interruption of their pain. No sleep accompanies that darkness: whatever ancient or modern poets, either Homer or Milton dream, there is no sleep, either in hell or heaven. And be their suffering ever so extreme, be their pain ever so intense, there is no possibility of their fainting away: no, not for a moment.

Again: The inhabitants of earth are frequently diverted from attending to what is afflictive, by the cheerful light of the sun, the vicissitudes of the seasons, "the busy hum of men," and a thousand objects that roll around them in endless variety. But the inhabitants of hell have nothing to divert them from their torments even for a moment:

> "Total eclipse: no sun, no moon!"

No change of seasons, or of companions. There is no business; but one uninterrupted scene of horror, to which they must be all attention. They have no interval of inattention or stupidity: they are all eye, all ear, all sense. Every instant of their duration, it may be said of their whole frame, that they are

——"Tremblingly alive all o'er,
And smart and agonize at every pore!"

3. And of this duration *there is no end!* What a thought is this! Nothing but eternity is the term of their torment! And who can count the drops of rain, or the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity? Every suffering is softened, if there be any hope, though distant, of deliverance from it. But here

"Hope never comes, that comes to all"

the inhabitants of the upper world! What! sufferings *never* to end!

"NEVER!—Where sinks the soul at that dread sound?
Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!"

Suppose millions of days, of years, of ages elapsed, still we are only on the threshold of eternity! Neither the pain of body nor of soul is any nearer an end, than it was millions of ages ago. When they are cast into το πυρ, το ασβεστον (How emphatical!) "The fire, the unquenchable," all is concluded: "Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!"

Such is the account which the Judge of all gives of the punishment which he has ordained for impenitent sinners. And what a counterbalance may the consideration of this be, to the violence of any temptation! In particular to the fear of man, the very use to which it is applied by our Lord himself: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell." Luke xii. 4, 5.

What a guard may these considerations be against any temptation from pleasure! Will you lose, for any of these poor, earthly pleasures, which perish in the using, (to say nothing of the present substantial pleasures of religion,) the pleasures of paradise, such "as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive?" Yea, the pleasures of heaven, the society of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, the conversing face to face with God your Father, your Saviour, your Sanctifier, and the drinking of those rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand for evermore?

Are you tempted by pain either of body or mind? O compare present things with future! What is the pain of body which you do or may endure, to that of lying in a lake of fire burning with brimstone? What is any pain of mind, any fear, anguish, sorrow, compared to the "worm that never dieth?" *That never dieth!* This is the sting of all! As for our pains on earth, blessed be God, they are

not eternal. There are some intervals to relieve, and there is some period to finish them. When we ask a friend that is sick, how he does, "I am in pain now," says he, "but I hope to be easy soon." This is a sweet mitigation of the present uneasiness. But how dreadful would his case be if he should answer, "I am all over pain, and I shall never be eased of it. I lie under exquisite torment of body and horror of soul. And I shall feel it *for ever!*" Such is the case of the damned sinners in hell. Suffer any pain then, rather than come into that place of torment.

I conclude with one more reflection, taken from Dr. Watts:—"It demands our highest gratitude, that we, who have long deserved this misery, are not plunged into it. While there are thousands that have been adjudged to this place of punishment, before they had continued so long in sin as many of us have done, what an instance is it of divine goodness, that we are not under this fiery vengeance? Have we not seen many sinners, on our right and our left, cut off in their sins? And what but the tender mercy of God, hath spared us week after week, month after month, and given us space for repentance? What shall we render unto the Lord, for all his patience and long suffering, even to this day? How often have we incurred the sentence of condemnation by our repeated rebellion against God? And yet we are still alive in his presence, and are hearing the words of hope and salvation. O let us look back and shudder at the thoughts of that dreadful precipice, on the edge of which we have so long wandered! Let us flee for refuge to the hope that is set before us, and give a thousand thanks to the divine mercy, that we are not plunged into this perdition!"

SERMON LXXIX.

OF THE CHURCH.

"*I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"—EPHESIANS iv. 1—6.

1. HOW much do we almost continually hear about *the Church!* With many it is matter of daily conversation. And yet how few

understand what they talk of! How few know what the term means! A more ambiguous word than this, *the Church*, is scarce to be found in the English language. It is sometimes taken for a building set apart for public worship: sometimes for a congregation, or body of people united together in the service of God. It is only in the latter sense that it is taken in the ensuing discourse.

2. It may be taken indifferently for any number of people, how small or great soever. As, "where two or three are met together in his name," there is Christ: so, (to speak with St. Cyprian,) "where two or three believers are met together, there is a Church." Thus it is that St. Paul, writing to Philemon, mentions "the Church which was in his house:" plainly signifying, that even a Christian family may be termed a Church.

3. Several of those whom God hath *called out of* the world, (so the original word properly signifies,) uniting together in one congregation, formed a larger Church; as the Church at Jerusalem; that is, all those in Jerusalem whom God had so called. But considering how swiftly these were multiplied, after the day of Pentecost, it cannot be supposed that they could continue to assemble in one place: especially as they had not then any large place, neither would they have been permitted to build one. In consequence, they must have divided themselves even at Jerusalem, into several distinct congregations. In like manner, when St. Paul, several years after, wrote to the Church in Rome, (directing his letter, "To all that are in Rome, called to be saints,") it cannot be supposed that they had any one building capable of containing them all; but they were divided into several congregations, assembling in several parts of the city.

4. The first time that the Apostle uses the word *Church*, is in his preface to the former Epistle to the Corinthians: "Paul called to be an Apostle of Jesus Christ, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth:" the meaning of which expression is fixed by the following words: "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus: with all that in every place," (not Corinth only; so it was a kind of circular letter,) "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both yours and ours." In the inscription of his second letter to the Corinthians, he speaks still more explicitly: "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia." Here he plainly includes all the Churches, or Christian congregations, which were in the whole province.

5. He frequently uses the word in the plural number. So Gal. i. 2, "Paul an Apostle—unto the Churches of Galatia," that is, the Christian congregations dispersed throughout that country. In all these places, (and abundantly more might be cited,) the word Church or Churches means, not the buildings where the Christians assembled, (as it frequently does in the English tongue,) but the people that used to assemble there, one or more Christian congregations. But sometimes the word *Church* is taken in Scripture in a still more extensive meaning, as including all the Christian congregations that

are upon the face of the earth. And in this sense we understand it in our Liturgy, when we say, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth." In this sense it is unquestionably taken by St. Paul, in his exhortation to the elders of Ephesus, (Acts xx. 28,) "Take heed to the Church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." The Church here undoubtedly means the Catholic or universal Church, that is, all the Christians under heaven.

6. Who those are that are properly *the Church of God*, the Apostle shows at large, and that in the clearest and most decisive manner, in the passage above cited: wherein he likewise instructs all the members of the Church, how to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called."

7. Let us consider, first, Who are properly *The Church of God?* What is the true meaning of that term? "The Church at Ephesus," as the Apostle himself explains it, means, *the saints*, the holy persons, *that were in Ephesus*, and there assembled themselves together to worship God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; whether they did this in one, or (as we may probably suppose) in several places. But it is the Church in general, the catholic or universal Church, which the Apostle here considers as *one body:* comprehending not only the Christians in the house of Philemon, or any one family; not only the Christians of one congregation, of one city, of one province or nation; but all the persons upon the face of the earth, who answered the character here given: the several particulars contained therein, we may now more distinctly consider.

8. *There is one Spirit* that animates all these, all the living members of the Church of God. Some understand hereby the Holy Spirit himself, the fountain of all spiritual life. And it is certain, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Others understand it of those spiritual gifts and holy dispositions which are afterward mentioned.

9. *There is*, in all those that have received this Spirit, *one hope*, a hope full of immortality. They know, to die is not to be lost: their prospect extends beyond the grave. They can cheerfully say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

10. *There is one Lord*, who has now dominion over them, who has set up his kingdom in their hearts, and reigns over all those that are partakers of this hope. To obey him, to run the way of his commandments, is their glory and joy. And while they are doing this with a willing mind, they, as it were, "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

11. *There is one faith*, which is the free gift of God, and is the ground of their hope. This is not barely the faith of a Heathen: namely, a belief that "there is a God," and that he is gracious and just, and consequently, "a rewarder of them that diligently seek

him." Neither is it barely the faith of a devil: though this goes much farther than the former: for the devil believes, and cannot but believe, all that is written both in the Old and New Testament to be true. But it is the faith of St. Thomas, teaching him to say with holy boldness, "My Lord, and my God." It is the faith which enables every true Christian believer to testify with St. Paul, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

12. *There is one baptism*, which is the outward sign our one Lord has been pleased to appoint, of all that inward and spiritual grace, which he is continually bestowing upon his Church. It is, likewise, a precious mean, whereby this faith and hope are given to those that diligently seek him. Some, indeed, have been inclined to interpret this in a figurative sense, as if it referred to that baptism of the Holy Ghost, which the Apostles received at the day of Pentecost, and which, in a lower degree, is given to all believers. But it is a stated rule in interpreting Scripture, never to depart from the plain, literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity. And beside, if we thus understood it, it would be a needless repetition, as being included in, "there is one Spirit."

13. *There is one God and Father of all*, that have the Spirit of adoption, which "crieth in their hearts, Abba, Father:" which "witnesseth" continually "with their spirits," that they are the children of God: *who is above all*—the Most High, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Governor of the whole universe. *And through all*—pervading all space, filling heaven and earth:

——————————————— Totam
Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens:—

And in you all—in a peculiar manner living in you, that are one body, by one Spirit:

Making your souls his lov'd abode,
The temples of indwelling God.

14. Here, then, is a clear unexceptionable answer to that question, What is the Church? The catholic or universal Church, is, All the persons in the universe, whom God hath so called out of the world, as to entitle them to the preceding character; as to be *one body*, united by *one Spirit*, having "one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all."

15. That part of this great body, of the universal Church, which inhabits any one kingdom or nation, we may properly term a national Church, as the Church of France, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland. A smaller part of the universal Church, are the Christians that inhabit one city or town, as the Church of Ephesus, and the rest of the seven Churches mentioned in the Revelation. Two or three Christian believers united together, are a Church in the narrowest sense of the word. Such was the Church

in the house of Philemon, and that in the house of Nymphas, mentioned in Col. iv. 15. A particular Church may, therefore, consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three millions. But still, whether they be larger or smaller, the same idea is to be preserved. They are one body, and have one Spirit, one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

16. This account is exactly agreeable to the nineteenth Article of our Church, the Church of England: (only the Article includes a little more than the Apostle has expressed.)

"*Of the Church.*

"The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered."

It may be observed, that, at the same time, our thirty-nine articles were compiled and published, a Latin translation of them was published by the same authority. In this the words were "Cœtus credentium," *a congregation of Believers;* plainly showing that by *faithful men*, the compilers meant, men endued with *living faith.* This brings the Article to a still nearer agreement to the account given by the Apostle.

But it may be doubted, whether the Article speaks of a particular Church, or of the Church Universal? The title, "Of the Church," seems to have reference to the catholic Church; but the second clause of the Article mentions the particular Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Perhaps it was intended to take in both: so to define the universal Church, as to keep in view the several particular Churches of which it is composed.

17. These things being considered, it is easy to answer that question, 'What is the Church of England?' It is that part, those members of the universal Church, who are inhabitants of England. The Church of England is, that body of men in England, in whom *there is one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith,*" which have "*one baptism,*" and "*one God and Father of all.*" This and this alone is the Church of England, according to the doctrine of the Apostle.

18. But the definition of a Church, laid down in the article, includes, not only this, but much more, by that remarkable addition, "in which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered:" according to this definition, those congregations in which the pure word of God (a strong expression) is not preached, are no parts either of the Church of England, or the Church Catholic. As neither are those in which the sacraments are not duly administered.

19. I will not undertake to defend the accuracy of this definition. I dare not exclude from the Church Catholic, all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines, which cannot be affirmed to be *the pure word of God*, are sometimes, yea, frequently, preached; neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not *duly administered.* Certainly if these things are so, the Church of Rome is not so much as a part of the Catholic Church: seeing therein neither

is *the pure word of God* preached, nor the Sacraments *duly administered*. Whoever they are that have "one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all," I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship. Nor would I, on these accounts, scruple still to include them within the pale of the Catholic Church. Neither would I have any objection to receive them, if they desired it, as members of the Church of England.

II. 20. We proceed now to the second point. What is it to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called?"

It should always be remembered, that the word *walk*, in the language of the Apostle, is of a very extensive signification. It includes all our inward and outward motions, all our thoughts, and words, and actions. It takes in not only every thing we do, but every thing we either speak or think. It is, therefore, no small thing to walk, in this sense of the word, "worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called:" to think, speak, and act, in every instance, in a manner worthy of our Christian calling.

21. We are called to walk, first, *with all lowliness:* to have the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; to be little, and poor, and mean, and vile in our own eyes: to know ourselves as also we are known by Him to whom all hearts are open: to be deeply sensible of our own unworthiness, of the universal depravity of our nature, (in which dwelleth no good thing:) prone to all evil, averse to all good; insomuch that we are, not only sick, but dead in trespasses and sins, till God breathes upon the dry bones, and creates life by the fruit of his lips. And suppose this is done, and suppose he has now quickened us, infusing life into our dead souls; yet how much of the carnal mind remains! How prone is our heart still to depart from the living God! What a tendency to sin remains in our heart, although we know our past sins are forgiven! And how much sin, in spite of all our endeavours, cleaves both to our words and actions! Who can be duly sensible how much remains in him of his natural enmity to God? Or how far he is still alienated from God, by the ignorance that is in him?

22. Yea, suppose God has now thoroughly cleansed our heart, and scattered the last remains of sin; yet how can we be sensible enough of our own helplessness, our utter inability to all good, unless we are every hour, yea, every moment, endued with power from on high? Who is able to think one good thought, or to form one good desire, unless by that Almighty Power which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure? We have need even in this state of grace, to be thoroughly and continually penetrated with a sense of this. Otherwise we shall be in perpetual danger of robbing God of his honour, by glorying in something we have received, as though we had not received it.

23. When our inmost soul is thoroughly tinctured therewith, it remains, that we be *clothed with humility*. The word used by St

Peter seems to imply, that we be covered with it as with a surtout: that we be all humility, both within and without, tincturing all we think, speak, and do. Let all our actions spring from this fountain: let all our words breathe this spirit, that all men may know we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him to be lowly in heart.

24. And being taught of him who was meek as well as lowly in heart, we shall then be enabled to *walk with all meekness*, being taught of Him who teacheth as never man taught, to be meek as well as lowly in heart. This implies, not only a power over anger, but over all violent and turbulent passions. It implies the having all our passions in due proportion, none of them either too strong or too weak, but all duly balanced with each other, all subordinate to reason; and reason directed by the Spirit of God. Let this equanimity govern your whole souls; that your thoughts may all flow in an even stream, and the uniform tenor of your words and actions be suitable thereto. In this *patience* you will then *possess your souls*, which are not our own, while we are tossed by unruly passions. And by this all men may know, that we are, indeed, followers of the meek and lowly Jesus.

25. Walk with all *long-suffering*. This is nearly related to meekness, but implies something more. It carries on the victory already gained over all your turbulent passions, notwithstanding all the powers of darkness, all the assaults of evil men or evil spirits. It is patiently triumphant over all opposition, and unmoved, though all the waves and storms thereof go over you. Though provoked ever so often, it is still the same, quiet and unshaken; never being *overcome of evil*, but overcoming evil with good.

26. The *forbearing one another in love* seems to mean, not only the not resenting any thing, and the not avenging yourselves; not only the not injuring, hurting, or grieving each other, either by word or deed; but also, the bearing one another's burdens; yea, and lessening them by every means in our power. It implies the sympathizing with them in their sorrows, afflictions, and infirmities; the bearing them up, when, without our help, they would be liable to sink under their burdens; the endeavouring to lift their sinking heads, and to strengthen their feeble knees.

27. Lastly: The true members of the Church of Christ, *endeavour*, with all possible diligence, with all care and pains, with unwearied patience, (and all will be little enough,) to *keep the Unity* of the Spirit in the bond of peace; to preserve inviolate the same spirit of lowliness and meekness, of long-suffering, mutual forbearance, and love; and all these cemented and knit together by that sacred tie, the peace of God filling the heart. Thus only can we be, and continue, living members of that Church which is the Body of Christ.

28. Does it not clearly appear from this whole account, why, in the ancient creed, commonly called the Apostles', we term it the universal or catholic Church? *The holy catholic Church?* How many wonderful reasons have been found out for giving it this appellation? One learned man informs us, "The church is called holy, because Christ, the head of it, is holy." Another eminent

author affirms, "It is so called, because all its ordinances are designed to promote holiness." And yet another, "Because our Lord *intended*, that all the members of the Church should be holy." Nay, the shortest and the plainest reason that can be given, and the only true one is, the Church is called *holy*, because it is *holy:* because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that hath called them is holy. How clear is this! If the Church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man that is not a Christian believer can be a member of it. If this whole body be animated by one Spirit, and endued with one faith, and one hope of their calling; then he who has not that Spirit, and faith, and hope, is no member of this body. It follows, that not only no common swearer, no sabbath-breaker, no drunkard, no whoremonger, no thief, no liar, none that lives in any outward sin; but none that is under the power of anger or pride; no lover of the world; in a word, none that is dead to God, can be a member of his Church.

29. Can any thing then be more absurd than for men to cry out, *The Church! The Church!* And to pretend to be very zealous for it, and violent defenders of it; while they themselves have neither part nor lot therein, nor indeed know what the Church is! And yet the hand of God is in this very thing! Even in this his wonderful wisdom appears, directing their mistake to his own glory, and causing "the earth to help the Woman." Imagining that they are members of it themselves, the men of the world frequently defend the Church. Otherwise, the wolves that surround the little flock on every side, would in a short time tear them in pieces. And for this very reason, it is not wise to provoke them more than is unavoidable. Even on this ground, let us, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, "live peaceably with all men." Especially as we know not how soon God may call them too out of the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of his dear Son.

30. In the mean time let all those who are real members of the Church, see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. "Ye are the light of the world!" Ye are "a city set upon a hill, and cannot be hid." O "let your light shine before men!" Show them your faith by your works. Let them see by the whole tenor of your conversation, that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the Spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man: let it overflow to every child of God. By this let all men know whose disciples ye are, because you "love one another."

SERMON LXXX.

ON SCHISM.

"*That there might be no Schism in the Body.*"—1 Cor. xii. 25.

1. IF there be any word in the English tongue as ambiguous and indeterminate in its meaning as the word *church*, it is one that is nearly allied to it, the word *Schism*. It has been the subject of innumerable disputes, for several hundreds of years: and almost innumerable books have been written concerning it in every part of the Christian world. A very large share of these have been published in our country; particularly during the last century, and the beginning of the present. And persons of the strongest understanding, and the most consummate learning, have exhausted all their strength upon the question, both in conversation and in writing. This has appeared to be more necessary than ever, since the grand separation of the Reformed from the Romish church. This is a charge which the members of that church never fail to bring against all that separate from her; and which, consequently, has employed the thoughts and pens of the most able disputants on both sides. And those of each side have generally, when they entered into the field, been secure of victory; supposing the strength of their arguments was so great, that it was impossible for reasonable men to resist them.

2. But it is observable, that exceedingly little good has been done by all these controversies. Very few of the warmest and ablest disputants have been able to convince their opponents. After all that could be said, the papists are papists, and the protestants are protestants still. And the same success has attended those who have so vehemently disputed about separation from the Church of England. Those who separated from her were eagerly charged with Schism: they as eagerly denied the charge. And scarcely any were able to convince their opponents, either on one side or the other.

3. One great reason why this controversy has been so unprofitable, why so few of either side have been convinced, is this: they seldom agreed as to the meaning of the word concerning which they disputed: and if they did not fix the meaning of this, if they did not define the term before they began disputing about it, they might continue the dispute to their lives' end, without getting one step forward; without coming a jot nearer to each other than when they first set out.

4. Yet it must be a point of considerable importance, or St. Paul would not have spoken so seriously of it. It is, therefore, highly needful, that we should consider,

I. The nature, and,

II. The evil of it.

I. 1. It is the more needful to do this, because, among the numberless books that have been written upon the subject, both by the Romanists and protestants, it is difficult to find any that define it in a scriptural manner. The whole body of Roman Catholics define schism, a separation from the Church of Rome: and almost all our own writers define it, a separation from the Church of England. Thus both the one and the other set out wrong, and stumble at the very threshold. This will easily appear to any that calmly consider the several texts wherein the word Schism occurs. From the whole tenor of which it is manifest, that it is not a separation *from* any church, (whether general or particular, whether the catholic, or any national church,) but a separation *in* a church.

2. Let us begin with the first verse, wherein St. Paul makes use of the word. It is the tenth verse of the first chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. The words are, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Schisms," (the original word is σχισματα,) "among you." Can any thing be more plain than that the *schisms* here spoken of, were not separations *from*, but divisions *in* the church of Corinth? Accordingly it follows, "But that ye be perfectly united together, in the same mind and in the same judgment." You see here, that an union in mind and judgment was the direct opposite to the Corinthian Schism. This consequently was not a separation from the church or Christian Society at Corinth; but a separation in the church: a disunion in mind and judgment, (perhaps also in affection,) among those who, notwithstanding this, continued outwardly united as before.

3. Of what nature this Schism at Corinth was, is still more clearly determined, (if any thing can be more clear,) by the words that immediately follow. "Now this I say,"—This is the Schism of which I speak; you are divided into separate parties: some of you speaking in favour of one, some of another preacher, "Every one of you saith," (ver. 12,) "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," (or Peter.) Who then does not see, that the Schism for which the Apostle here reproves the Corinthians, is neither more nor less than the splitting into several parties, as they gave the preference to one or another preacher? And this species of Schism there will be occasion to guard against in every religious community.

4. The second place where the Apostle uses this word, is in the eighteenth verse of the eleventh chapter of this Epistle. "When ye come together in the church," the Christian congregation, "I hear that there are divisions," (the original word here also is σχισματα, *Schisms among you.*) The Apostle immediately tells you, (ver. 10,) "When you come together," professing your design is "to eat of the

Lord's Supper, every one of you taketh before another his own supper," as if it were a common meal. What then was the Schism? It seems in doing this, they divided into little parties, which cherished anger and resentment, one against another, even at that solemn season.

5. May it not be observed, (to make a little digression here, for the sake of those who are troubled with needless scruples on this head,) that the sin which the Apostle charges on the Communicants at Corinth in this chapter is usually quite misunderstood. It was precisely this, and nothing else; "The taking one before another his own supper;" and in such a shocking manner, that while "one was hungry, another was drunken." By doing this, he says, *ye eat and drink*, (not *damnation;* a vile mistranslation of the word, but) *judgment*, temporal judgment, *to yourselves:* which sometimes shortened their lives. "For this cause"—for sinning in this vile manner, "many are sick and weak among you." Observe here two things: First, What was the sin of the Corinthians? Mark it well and remember it. It was *taking one before another his own supper*, so that while *one was hungry, another was drunken.* Secondly, What was the punishment? It was bodily weakness and sickness, which, without repentance, might end in death. But what is this to *you?* You cannot commit *their* sin: therefore, you cannot incur their punishment.

6. But to return. It deserves to be seriously remarked, that, in this chapter, the Apostle uses the word *Heresies* as exactly equivalent with the word *Schisms.* "I hear," says he, ver. 18, "that there are Schisms among you, and I partly believe it:" he then adds, ver. 19, "for there must be heresies," (another word for the same thing,) "among you, that they which are approved among you, may be made manifest." As if he had said, "The wisdom of God permits it so to be, for this end, for the clear manifestation of those whose heart is right with him." This word, therefore, (*Heresy,*) which has been so strangely distorted for many centuries, as if it meant erroneous opinions, opinions contrary to the faith delivered to the saints, which has been made a pretence for destroying cities, depopulating countries, and shedding seas of innocent blood; has not the least reference to opinions, whether right or wrong. It simply means, wherever it occurs in Scripture, *Divisions*, or *Parties* in a religious community.

7. The third, and the only remaining place in this Epistle, wherein the Apostle uses this word, is the twenty-fifth verse of the twelfth chapter; where, speaking of the Church, (he seems to mean the Church Universal, the whole Body of Christ) he observes, "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no Schism in the body," ver. 24, 25. He immediately fixes the meaning of his own words, "But that the members might have the same care one for another: and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We may easily observe, that the word *Schism* here means the want of this tender care for each other. It undoubtedly means an alienation of

affection in any of them toward their brethren: a division of heart, and parties springing therefrom, though they were still outwardly united together: though they still continued members of the same external Society.

8. But there seems to be one considerable objection against the supposing *Heresy* and *Schism* to mean the same thing. It is said, St. Peter, in the second chapter of his second epistle, takes the word *Heresies* in a quite different sense. His words are, ver. 1, "There shall be among you false teachers, who will bring in damnable" (or destructive) "heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." It does by no means appear, that St. Peter here takes the word *Heresies* in any other sense than St. Paul does. Even in this passage it does not appear to have any reference to opinions, good or bad. Rather it means, They will *bring in*, or occasion, *destructive parties* or *sects*, (so it is rendered in the common French translation) who *deny the Lord that bought them:* such sects now swarm throughout the Christian world.

9. I shall be thankful to any one who will point out to me any other place in the inspired writings, where this word *Schism* is to be found. I remember only these three. And it is apparent to every impartial reader, that it does not in any of these, mean, a separation from any Church or Body of Christians, whether with or without cause. So that the immense pains which have been taken both by Papists and Protestants, in writing whole volumes against Schism, as a separation, whether from the Church of Rome, or from the Church of England, exerting all their strength, and bringing all their learning, have been employed to mighty little purpose. They have been fighting with shadows of their own raising: violently combating a sin which had no existence, but in their own imagination, which is not once forbidden, no, nor once mentioned either in the Old or New Testament.

10. "But is there no sin resembling what so many learned and pious writers have termed *Schism?* and against which all the members of religious communities have need to be carefully guarded?" I do not doubt but there is; and I cannot tell, whether this too may not, in a remote sense, be called *Schism.* I mean, "A causeless separation from a body of living Christians." There is no absurdity in taking the word in this sense, though it be not strictly scriptural. And it is certain all the members of Christian communities should be carefully guarded against it. For how little a thing soever it may seem, and how innocent soever it may be accounted, *Schism*, even in this sense, is both evil in itself, and productive of evil consequences.

11. It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of

separating from our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause; otherwise, they would still hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is, therefore, contrary to all those commands of God, wherein brotherly love is enjoined: to that of St. Paul, "Let brotherly love continue;" that of St. John, "My beloved children, love one another;" and especially to that of our blessed Master: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." Yea, "by this," saith he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

12. And as such a separation is evil in itself, being a breach of brotherly love, so it brings forth evil fruit; it is naturally productive of the most mischievous consequences. It opens a door to all unkind tempers, both in ourselves and others. It leads directly to a whole train of evil-surmisings, to severe and uncharitable judging of each other. It gives occasion to offence, to anger, and resentment, perhaps in ourselves as well as in our brethren, which, if not presently stopped, may issue in bitterness, malice, and settled hatred; creating a present hell wherever they are found, as a prelude to hell eternal.

13. But the ill consequences of even this species of Schism, do not terminate in the heart. Evil tempers cannot long remain within, before they are productive of outward fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As he whose heart is full of love, openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his lips there is the law of kindness; so he whose heart is full of prejudice, anger, suspicion, or any unkind temper, will surely open his mouth in a manner corresponding with the disposition of his mind. And hence will arise, if not lying and slandering, (which yet will hardly be avoided,) bitter words, tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil-speaking of every kind.

14. From evil words, from tale-bearing, backbiting, and evil-speaking, how many evil works will naturally flow! Anger, jealousy, envy, wrong tempers of every kind, do not vent themselves merely in words, but push men continually to all kind of ungodly and unrighteous actions. A plentiful harvest of all the works of darkness, may be expected to spring from this source: whereby, in the end, thousands of souls, and not a few of those who once walked in the light of God's countenance, may be turned from the way of peace, and finally drowned in everlasting perdition.

15. Well might our blessed Lord say, "Wo unto the world because of offences!" Yet "it must needs be, that offences will come:" yea, abundance of them will, of necessity, arise, when a breach of this sort is made in any religious community: while they that leave it endeavour to justify themselves, by censuring those they separate from; and these, on the other hand, retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightily does all this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God! How does it hinder his mild and gentle operations in the souls both of the one and the other!

Heresies and Schisms, (in the scriptural sense of those words) will sooner or later be the consequence: parties will be formed on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold. The hunger and thirst after righteousness, after either the favour or the full image of God, together with the longing desires, wherewith so many were filled, of promoting the work of God in the souls of their brethren, will grow languid, and as offences increase, will gradually die away. And as the "fruit of the Spirit" withers away, "the works of the flesh" will again prevail; to the utter destruction, first of the power, and then of the very form of religion. These consequences are not imaginary, are not built on mere conjectures, but on plain matter of fact. This has been the case again and again within these last thirty or forty years: these have been the fruits which we have seen over and over, to be consequent on such a separation.

16. And what a grievous stumbling-block must these things be to those who are without! To those who are strangers to religion! Who have neither the form nor the power of godliness! How will they triumph over these once eminent Christians! How boldly ask, "What are they better than us?" How will they harden their hearts more and more against the truth, and bless themselves in their wickedness? From which, possibly, the example of the Christians might have reclaimed them, had they continued unblamable in their behaviour. Such is the complicated mischief which persons separating from a Christian church or society do, not only to themselves, but to that whole society, and to the whole world in general.

17. But perhaps such persons will say, "We did not do this willingly: we were constrained to separate from that society, because we could not continue therein with a clear conscience: we could not continue without sin. I was not allowed to continue therein, without breaking a commandment of God." If this were the case, you could not be blamed for separating from that society. Suppose, for instance, you were a member of the Church of Rome, and you could not remain therein, without committing idolatry, without worshipping of idols, whether images, or saints and angels, then it would be your bounden duty to leave that community, totally to separate from it. Suppose you could not remain in the Church of England, without doing something which the word of God forbids, or omitting something which the word of God positively commands: if this were the case, (but, blessed be God, it is not,) you ought to separate from the Church of England. I will make the case my own. I am now, and have been from my youth, a member and minister of the Church of England. And I have no desire nor design to separate from it, till my soul separates from my body. Yet if I was not permitted to remain therein, without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet, and right, and my bounden duty, to separate from it without delay. To be more particular, I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the Gospel. Yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it; "Wo is me if I preach not

the Gospel." If then I could not remain in the church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the Gospel, I should be under the necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul. In like manner, if I could not continue united to any smaller society, church, or body of Christians, without committing sin, without lying and hypocrisy, without preaching to others doctrines which I did not myself believe, I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all these cases the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion, as I could not in conscience comply with. But setting aside this case, suppose the church or society to which I am now united, does not require me to do any thing which the Scripture forbids, or to omit any thing which the Scripture enjoins, it is then my indispensable duty to continue therein. And if I separate from it, without any such necessity, I am justly chargeable, (whether I foresaw them or not,) with all the evils consequent upon that separation.

18. I have spoken the more explicitly upon this head, because it is so little understood; because so many of those who profess much religion, nay, and really enjoy a measure of it, have not the least conception of this matter, neither imagine such a separation to be any sin at all. They leave a Christian society with as much unconcern, as they go out of one room into another. They give occasion to all this complicated mischief; and wipe their mouth, and say they have done no evil! Whereas they are justly chargeable before God and man, both with an action that is evil in itself, and with all the evil consequences which may be expected to follow, to themselves, to their brethren, and to the world.

19. I entreat you, therefore, my brethren, all that fear God, and have a desire to please him; all that wish to have a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward man; think not so slightly of this matter, but consider it calmly. Do not rashly tear asunder the sacred ties which unite you to any Christian society. This indeed is not of so much consequence to *you* who are only a *nominal* Christian. For you are not now vitally united to any of the members of Christ. Though you are called a Christian, you are not really a member of any Christian church. But if you are a living member, if you live the life that is hid with Christ in God, then take care how you rend the body of Christ, by separating from your brethren. It is a thing evil in itself. It is a sore evil in its consequences. O, have pity upon yourself! Have pity on your brethren! Have pity even upon the world of the ungodly! Do not lay more stumbling-blocks in the way of those for whom Christ died.

20. But if you are afraid, and that not without reason, of *Schism*, improperly so called; how much more afraid will you be, if your conscience is tender, of *Schism* in the proper scriptural sense! O beware, I will not say of *forming*, but of *countenancing*, or *abetting* any *parties* in a Christian society. Never encourage, much less

cause, either by word or action, any division therein. In the nature of things, *there must be heresies* [divisions] *among you:* but keep thyself pure. Leave off contention before it be meddled with: shun the very beginning of strife. Meddle not with them that are given to dispute, nor with them that love contention. I never knew that remark to fail, "He that loves to dispute, does not love God." Follow peace with all men, without which you cannot effectually follow holiness. Not only *seek peace*, but *ensue it;* if it seem to flee from you, pursue it nevertheless. "Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good."

21. Happy is he that attains the character of a peace-maker in the Church of God. Why should not *you* labour after this? Be not content not to stir up strife; but do all that in you lies, to prevent or quench the very first spark of it. Indeed it is far easier to prevent the flame from breaking out, than to quench it afterward. However, be not afraid to attempt even this; the God of peace is on your side. He will give you acceptable words, and send them to the hearts of the hearers. *Noli diffidere: noli dicedere*, says a pious man, *Fac quod in te est; et Deus aderit bonæ tuæ voluntati*, "Do not distrust him that has all power; that has the hearts of all men in his hand. Do what in thee lies, and God will be present, and bring thy good desires to good effect." Never be weary of well-doing: in due time thou shalt reap, if thou faint not.

SERMON LXXXI.

ON PERFECTION.

"*Let us go on unto Perfection.*"—HEBREWS vi. 1.

THE whole sentence runs thus: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection: not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God," which he had just before termed, "the first principles of the Oracles of God," and "meat fit for babes;" for such as have just tasted that the Lord is gracious.

That the doing of this is a point of the utmost importance, the Apostle intimates in the next word, "This will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance." As if he had said, If we do not *go on to perfection*, we are in the

utmost danger of *falling away*. And if we do fall away, it is *impossible* [that is, exceeding hard,] *to renew us again to repentance.*

In order to make this very important Scripture as easy to be understood as possible, I shall endeavour,

I. To show, what perfection is:

II. To answer some objections to it: And,

III. To expostulate a little with the opposers of it.

I. I will endeavour to show what perfection is.

1. And first, I do not conceive the perfection here spoken of, to be the perfection of angels. As those glorious beings never *left their first estate*, never declined from their original perfection, all their native faculties are unimpaired, their understanding in particular is still a lamp of light, their apprehension of all things clear and distinct, and their judgment always true. Hence, though their knowledge is limited, (for they are creatures,) though they are ignorant of innumerable things, yet they are not liable to mistake; their knowledge is perfect in its kind. And as their affections are all constantly guided by their unerring understanding, so that all their actions are suitable thereto; so they do, every moment, not their own will, but the good and acceptable will of God. Therefore, it is not possible for man, whose understanding is darkened, to whom mistake is as natural as ignorance, who cannot think at all, but by the mediation of organs which are weakened and depraved, like the other parts of his corruptible body: it is not possible, I say, for man always to think right, to apprehend things distinctly, and to judge truly of them. In consequence hereof his affections, depending on his understanding, are variously disordered. And his words and actions are influenced, more or less, by the disorder both of his understanding and affections. It follows, that no man while in the body, can possibly attain to *angelic perfection.*

2. Neither can any man, while he is in a corruptible body, attain to Adamic perfection. Adam, before his fall, was undoubtedly as pure, as free from sin, as even the holy angels. In like manner, his understanding was as clear as theirs, and his affections as regular. In virtue of this, as he always judged right, so he was able always to speak and act right. But since man rebelled against God, the case is widely different with him. He is no longer able to avoid falling into innumerable mistakes; consequently he cannot always avoid wrong affections, neither can he always think, speak, and act right. Therefore, man, in his present state, can no more attain Adamic than angelic perfection.

3. The highest perfection which man can attain, while the soul dwells in the body, does not exclude ignorance and error, and a thousand other infirmities. Now from wrong judgments, wrong words and actions will often necessarily flow. And in some cases, wrong affections also may spring from the same source. I may judge wrong of you: I may think more or less highly of you than I ought to think. And this mistake in my judgment, may not only occasion something wrong in my behaviour, but it may have a still deeper

effect; it may occasion something wrong in my affections. From a wrong apprehension, I may love and esteem you either more or less than I ought. Nor can I be freed from a liableness to such a mistake, while I remain in a corruptible body. A thousand infirmities in consequence of this, will attend my spirit, till it returns to God who gave it. And in numberless instances it comes short of doing the will of God, as Adam did in Paradise. Hence the best of men may say from the heart,

"Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death,"

for innumerable violations of the Adamic as well as the angelic law. It is well, therefore, for us, that we are not under these, but under the Law of Love. "*Love is*" now "*the fulfilling of the law,*" which is given to fallen man. This is now, with respect to us, "*the perfect law.*" But even against this, through the present weakness of our understanding, we are continually liable to transgress. Therefore, every man living needs the blood of atonement, or he could not stand before God.

4. What is then the perfection of which man is capable, while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command, "My son, give me thy heart." It is the "loving the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is the sum of Christian perfection; it is all comprised in that one word, Love. The first branch of it is the love of God: and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as Christ loved us. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" these contain the whole of Christian perfection.

5. Another view of this is given us, in those words of the great Apostle, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." For although this immediately and directly refers to the humility of our Lord, yet it may be taken in a far more extensive sense, so as to include the whole disposition of his mind, all his affections, all his tempers, both toward God and man. Now it is certain that as there was no evil affection in him, so no good affection or temper was wanting. So that "whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are lovely," are all included in "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

6. St. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, places Perfection in yet another view. It is the one undivided *fruit of the Spirit*, which he describes thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity," (so the word should be translated here,) "meekness, temperance." What a glorious constellation of graces is here! Now suppose all these things to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection.

7. Again: He writes to the Christians at Ephesus of "putting

on the new man, which is created after God, in righteousness and true holiness." And to the Colossians, of "the new man renewed after the image of him that created him:" plainly referring to the words in Genesis, (chap. i. 27.) "So God created man in his own image." Now the moral image of God consists, (as the Apostle observes,) "in righteousness and true holiness." By sin this is totally destroyed. And we never can recover it, till we are "created anew in Christ Jesus." And this is perfection.

8. St. Peter expresses it in a still different manner, though to the same effect. "As He that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." 1 Pet. i. 15. According to this Apostle then, perfection is another name for universal holiness; inward and outward righteousness: holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart.

9. If any expressions can be stronger than these, they are those of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, (1 Epistle, v. 23,) "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may the whole of you, the spirit, the soul, and the body," (this is the literal translation,) "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

10. We cannot show this sanctification in a more excellent way, than by complying with that exhortation of the Apostle, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies," (yourselves, your souls and bodies; a part put for the whole, by a common figure of speech,) "a living sacrifice unto God;" to whom ye were consecrated many years ago in baptism. When what was then devoted, is actually presented to God, then is the man of God perfect.

11. To the same effect St. Peter says, 1 Epistle ii. 5, "Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." But what sacrifices shall we offer now, seeing the Jewish dispensation is at an end? If you have truly presented yourselves to God, you offer up to him continually all your thoughts, and words, and actions, through the Son of his love, as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

12. Thus you experience, that He whose name is called JESUS, does not bear that name in vain: that he does in fact "save his people from their sins," the root, as well as the branches. And this *salvation from sin*, from all sin, is another description of perfection, though indeed it expresses only the least, the lowest branch of it, only the negative part of the great salvation.

II. I proposed, in the second place, to answer some objections to this scriptural account of perfection.

1. One common objection to it is, That there is no promise of it in the word of God. If this were so we must give it up: we should have no foundation to build upon. For the promises of God are the only sure foundation of our hope. But surely there is a very clear and full promise, that we shall all love the Lord our God with all our hearts. So we read, Deut. xxx. 6, "Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Equally express is the word of

our Lord, which is no less a promise, though in the form of a command, Matt. xxii. 37, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." No words can be stronger than these, no promise can be more express. In like manner, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is as express a promise as a command.

2. And, indeed, that general and unlimited promise, which runs through the whole Gospel dispensation, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts," turns all the commands into promises: and consequently that among the rest, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The command here is equivalent to a promise, and gives us full reason to expect, that he will work in us what he requires of us.

3. With regard to the fruit of the Spirit, the Apostle in affirming, "the fruit of the Spirit, is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," does, in effect, affirm, that the Holy Spirit actually works love, and these other tempers in those that are led by him. So that here also, we have firm ground to tread upon: this scripture likewise being equivalent to a promise, and assuring us that all these shall be wrought in us, provided we are led by the Spirit.

4. And when the Apostle says to the Ephesians, chapter iv. 21, "Ye have been taught, as the truth is in Jesus," to be "renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, which is created after God," that is, after the image of God, "in righteousness and true holiness:" he leaves us no room to doubt, but God will thus "renew us in the spirit of our mind, and create us anew in the image of God, wherein we were, at first, created." Otherwise it could not be said, that this is the "truth as it is in Jesus."

5. The command of God, given by St. Peter, "Be ye holy, as He that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation," implies a promise that we shall be thus holy, if we are not wanting to ourselves. Nothing can be wanting on God's part: as he has called us to holiness, he is, undoubtedly, willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give. That he does call us thereto is undeniable; therefore, he will give it, if we are not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

6. The prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians, That God would "sanctify them throughout," and "that the whole of them, the spirit, the soul, and the body might be preserved blameless:" will, undoubtedly, be heard in behalf of all the children of God, as well as of those at Thessalonica. Hereby, therefore, all Christians are encouraged to expect the same blessing from "the God of peace," namely, That they also shall be "sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body;" and that "the whole of them shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

7. But the great question is, Whether there is any promise in Scripture, that we shall be *saved from sin?* Undoubtedly there is

Such is that promise, Psalm cxxx. 8, "He shall redeem Israel from all his sins:" exactly answerable to those words of the angel, "He shall save his people from their sins." And surely "he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God through him." Such is that glorious promise given through the Prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh; and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." ver. 25—27. Such (to mention no more,) is that pronounced by Zacharias, Luke i. 73—75, "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies," (and such, doubtless, are all our sins,) "to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The last part of this promise is peculiarly worthy of our observation. Lest any should say, "True, we shall be saved from all our sins when we die;" that clause is remarkably added, as if on purpose to obviate this pretence, *all the days of our life.* With what modesty then can any one affirm, "That none shall enjoy this liberty *till death?*"

8. "But," say some, "this cannot be the meaning of the words; for the thing is impossible." It is impossible to men; but the things impossible with men, are possible with God. "Nay, but this is impossible in its own nature; for it implies a contradiction, that a man should be saved from all sin, while he is in a sinful body."

There is a great deal of force in this objection. And perhaps we allow most of what you contend for. We have already allowed that while we are in the body, we cannot be wholly free from mistake. Notwithstanding all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice. Nay, a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions, which is not strictly right. It may occasion needless fear, or ill-grounded hope; unreasonable love, or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with the perfection above described.

9. You say, "Yes, it is inconsistent with the last article: it cannot consist with salvation from sin." I answer, It will perfectly well consist with salvation from sin, according to that definition of sin, (which I apprehend to be the Scriptural definition of it,) *A voluntary transgression of a known law.* "Nay, but all transgressions of the law of God, whether voluntary or involuntary, are sin. For St. John says, All *sin is a transgression of the law.*" True, but he does not say, *All transgression of the law is sin.* This I deny: let him prove it that can.

To say the truth, this is a mere strife of words. You say, "None is saved from sin in *your* sense of the word; but I do not admit of that sense, because the word is never so taken in Scripture. And you

cannot destroy the possibility of being saved from sin in *my* sense of the word. And this is the sense wherein the word sin, is, over and over, taken in Scripture.

"But surely we cannot be saved from sin, while we dwell in a *sinful body.*" A *sinful body?* I pray observe, how deeply ambiguous, how equivocal this expression is! But there is no authority for it in Scripture: the words *sinful body* is never found there. And as it is totally unscriptural, so it is palpably absurd. For no *body*, or matter of any kind, can be *sinful;* spirits alone are capable of sin. Pray, in what part of the body should sin lodge? It cannot lodge in the skin, nor in the muscles, or nerves, or veins, or arteries; it cannot be in the bones any more than in the hair or nails. Only the soul can be the seat of sin.

10. "But does not St. Paul himself say, They that are in the flesh cannot please God?" I am afraid the sound of these words has deceived many unwary souls; who have been told those words, *they that are in the flesh*, mean the same as they that are in the body. No, nothing less. *The flesh* in this text no more means the body than it does the soul. Abel, Enoch, Abraham; yea, all that cloud of witnesses recited by St. Paul in the eleventh of the Hebrews, did actually please God, while they were in the body, as he himself testifies. The expression, therefore, here means neither more nor less, than they that are unbelievers, they that are in their natural state, they that are without God in the world.

11. But let us attend to the reason of the thing. Why cannot the Almighty sanctify the soul while it is in the body? Cannot he sanctify *you* while you are in this house, as well as in the open air? Can the walls of brick or stone hinder him? No more can these walls of flesh and blood hinder him a moment from sanctifying you throughout. He can just as easily save you from all sin in the body as out of the body.

"But has he promised thus to save us from sin while we are in the body?" Undoubtedly he has: for a promise is implied in every commandment of God: consequently in that, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." For this and every other commandment is given, not to the dead, but to the living. It is expressed in the words above recited, That we should "walk in holiness before him all the days of our life."

I have dwelt the longer on this, because it is the grand argument of those that oppose salvation from sin; and also because it has not been so frequently and so fully answered: whereas, the arguments taken from Scripture, have been answered a hundred times over.

12. But a still more plausible objection remains, taken from experience; which is, That there are no living witnesses of this salvation from sin. In answer to this, I allow,

(1.) That there are not many. Even in this sense, there are *not many fathers.* Such is our hardness of heart; such our slowness

to believe what both the Prophets and Apostles have spoken, that there are few, exceedingly few true witnesses of the great salvation.

(2.) I allow, That there are false witnesses, who either deceive their own souls, and speak of the things they know not; or "speak lies in hypocrisy." And I have frequently wondered, that we have not more of both sorts. It is nothing strange, that men of warm imaginations should deceive themselves in this matter. Many do the same with regard to justification: they imagine they are justified, and are not. But though many imagine it falsely, yet there are some that are truly justified. And thus though many imagine they are sanctified, and are not, yet there are some that are really sanctified.

(3.) I allow, that some who once enjoyed full salvation, have now totally lost it. They once walked in glorious liberty, giving God their whole heart, "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks." But it is past. They now are shorn of their strength, and become like other men. Yet, perhaps, they do not give up their confidence: they still have a sense of his pardoning love. But even this is frequently assaulted by doubts and fears, so that they hold it with a trembling hand.

13. "Nay, this," say some pious and sensible men, "is the very thing which we contend for. We grant, it may please God, to make some of his children, for a time, unspeakably holy and happy. We will not deny, that they may enjoy all the holiness and happiness which you speak of. But it is only *for a time:* God never designed, that it should continue to their lives' end. Consequently, sin is only suspended; it is not destroyed."

This you affirm. But it is a thing of so deep importance, that it cannot be allowed without clear and cogent proof. And where is the proof? We know that, in general, "*the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*" He does not repent of any gifts which he hath bestowed upon the children of men. And how does the contrary appear, with regard to this particular gift of God? Why should we imagine, that he will make an exception, with respect to the most precious of all his gifts, on this side heaven? Is he not as able to give it us always, as to give it once?—As able to give it for fifty years as for one day? And how can it be proved, that he is not willing to continue this his loving-kindness? How is this supposition, that he is not willing, consistent with the positive assertion of the Apostle? who, after exhorting the Christians at Thessalonica, and in them all Christians in all ages, to "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks," immediately adds, (as if on purpose to answer those, who denied, not the *power*, but the *will* of God to work in them,) "For this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus." Nay, and it is remarkable, that after he had delivered that glorious promise, (such it properly is) in the twenty-third verse, "The very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly; and the whole of you," (so it is in the original) "the spirit, the soul, and the body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming

of the Lord Jesus Christ." He adds again, "Faithful is He that hath called you, who also will do it." He *will* not only sanctify you wholly, but will preserve you in that state, until he comes to receive you unto himself.

14. Agreeably to this is the plain matter of fact. Several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without any interruption for many years. Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath: calmly witnessing, that God had saved them from all sin, till their spirit returned to God.

15. As to the whole of the objections taken from experience, I desire it may be observed farther, either the persons objected to have attained Christian Perfection, or they have not. If they have not, whatever objections are brought against them, strike wide of the mark. For they are not the persons we are talking of: therefore, whatever they are or do, is beside the question. But if they have attained it, if they answer the description given, under the nine preceding articles, no reasonable objection can lie against them. They are superior to all censure. And "every tongue that riseth up against them will they utterly condemn."

16. "But I never saw one" (continues the objector) "that answered my idea of perfection." It may be so. And it is probable, (as I observed elsewhere) you never will. For your idea includes abundantly too much: even freedom from those infirmities, which are not separable from a spirit that is connected with flesh and blood. But if you keep the account that is given above, and allow for the weakness of human understanding, you may see, at this day, undeniable instances of genuine, scriptural perfection.

III. 1. It only remains, in the third place, to expostulate a little with the opposers of this perfection.

Now permit me to ask, why are you so angry with those who profess to have attained this? And so mad (I cannot give it a softer title) against Christian perfection?—Against the most glorious gifts which God ever gave to the children of men upon earth? View it in every one of the preceding points of light, and see what it contains that is either odious or terrible: that is calculated to excite either hatred or fear, in any reasonable creature.

What rational objection can you have, to the loving the Lord your God with all your heart? Why should you be afraid of it? Would it do you any hurt? Would it lessen your happiness, either in this world, or the world to come? And why should you be unwilling, that others should give him their whole heart? Or that they should love their neighbours as themselves?—Yea, "as Christ hath loved us?" Is this detestable? Is it the proper object of hatred? Or is it the most amiable thing under the sun? Is it proper to move terror? Is it not rather desirable in the highest degree?

2. Why are you so averse to having in you the whole *mind which was in Christ Jesus?* All the affections, all the tempers and dispositions which were in him, while he dwelt among men? Why should

you be afraid of this? Would it be any worse for you, were God to work in you this very hour all the mind that was in him? If not, why should you hinder others from seeking this blessing? Or be displeased at those who think they have attained it? Is any thing more lovely? Any thing more to be desired by every child of man?

3. Why are you averse to having the whole *fruit of the Spirit?* Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance? Why should you be afraid of having all these planted in your inmost soul? As "against these there is no law," so there cannot be any reasonable objection. Surely nothing is more desirable, than that all these tempers should take deep root in your heart: nay, in the hearts of all that name the Name of Christ: yea, of all the inhabitants of the earth.

4. What reason have you to be afraid of, or to entertain any aversion to, the being "renewed in the whole image of him that created you?" Is not this more desirable than any thing under heaven? Is it not consummately amiable? What can you wish for in comparison of this, either for your own soul, or for those for whom you entertain the strongest and tenderest affection? And when you enjoy this, what remains but to be "changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?"

5. Why should you be averse to universal holiness? The same thing under another name. Why should you entertain any prejudice against this, or look upon it with apprehension? Whether you understand by that term the being inwardly conformed to the whole image and will of God; or an outward behaviour, in every point suitable to that conformity. Can you conceive any thing more amiable than this? Any thing more desirable? Set prejudice aside, and surely you will desire to see it diffused over all the earth.

6. Is Perfection, (to vary the expression) the being *sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body?* What lover of God and man can be averse to this, or entertain frightful apprehensions of it? Is it not, in your best moments, your desire to be all of a piece?—All consistent with yourself?—All faith, all meekness, all love?—And suppose you were once possessed of this glorious liberty, would not you wish to continue therein? To be preserved "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?"

7. For what cause should you that are children of God, be averse to, or afraid of, presenting yourselves, your souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God?—to God your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier? Can any thing be more desirable than this entire self-dedication to him? And is it not your wish that all mankind should unite in this *reasonable service?* Surely no one can be averse to this without being an enemy to all mankind.

8. And why should you be afraid of, or averse to, what is naturally implied in this? Namely, the offering up all our thoughts, and words, and actions, as a spiritual sacrifice to God, acceptable to him through the blood and intercession of his well-beloved Son? Surely you cannot deny that this is good and profitable to men, as well as

pleasing to God. Should you not then devoutly pray, that both you and all mankind may thus worship him in spirit and in truth?

9. Suffer me to ask one question more. Why should any man of reason and religion, be either afraid of, or averse to, salvation from all sin? Is not sin the greatest evil on this side hell? And if so, does it not naturally follow, that an entire deliverance from it is one of the greatest blessings on this side heaven? How earnestly then should it be prayed for by all the children of God! By sin I mean, *a voluntary transgression of a known law.* Are you averse to being delivered from this? Are you afraid of such a deliverance? Do you then love sin, that you are so unwilling to part with it? Surely no. You do not love either the devil or his works. You rather wish to be totally delivered from them: to have sin rooted out both of your life and your heart.

10. I have frequently observed, and not without surprise, that the opposers of Christian Perfection are more vehement against it when it is placed in this view, than in any other whatsoever: they will allow all you say of the love of God and man; of the mind which was in Christ, of the fruit of the Spirit, of the image of God, of universal holiness, of entire self-dedication, of sanctification in spirit, soul, and body: yea, and of the offering up of all our thoughts, words, and actions, as a sacrifice to God. All this they will allow, so we will allow sin, a little sin, to remain in us till death.

11. Pray compare this with that remarkable passage in John Bunyan's Holy War. "When Immanuel," says he, "had driven Diabolus and all his forces out of the city of Mansoul, Diabolus preferred a petition to Immanuel, that he might have only a small part of the city. When this was rejected, he begged to have only a little room within the walls." But Immanuel answered, "He should have no place in it at all, no, not to rest the sole of his foot."

Had not the good old man forgot himself? Did not the force of truth so prevail over him here, as utterly to overturn his own system? To assert Perfection in the clearest manner? For if this is not salvation from sin, I cannot tell what is.

12. "No," says a great man, "this is the error of errors: I hate it from my heart. I pursue it through all the world with fire and sword." Nay, why so vehement? Do you seriously think there is no error under heaven equal to this? Here is something which I cannot understand. Why are those that oppose salvation from sin (few excepted) so eager? I had almost said, furious? Are you fighting *pro aris et focis!*—For God and your country?—For all you have in the world?—For all that is near and dear unto you?—For your liberty?—Your life? In God's name, why are you so fond of sin? What good has it ever done you? What good is it ever likely to do you, either in this world, or in the world to come? And why are you so violent against those that hope for a deliverance from it? Have patience with us, if we are in error: yea, suffer us to enjoy our error. If we should not attain it, the very expectation of this deliverance gives us present comfort. Yea, and ministers strength

to resist those enemies which we expect to conquer. If you could persuade us to despair of that victory, we should give over the contest. Now "we are saved by hope:" from this very hope a degree of salvation springs. Be not angry at those who are—*Felices errore suo:* Happy in their mistake. Else, be their opinion right or wrong, your temper is undeniably sinful: bear then with *us*, as we do with *you;* and see whether the Lord will not deliver us! Whether he is not able, yea, and willing "to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him."

SERMON LXXXII.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

"*This is the true* GOD, *and eternal* LIFE."—1 JOHN v. 20.

1. IN this Epistle, St. John speaks, not to any particular Church, but to all the Christians of that age: although more especially to them among whom he then resided. And in them he speaks to the whole Christian Church, in all succeeding ages.

2. In this letter, or rather tract, (for he was present with those to whom it was more immediately directed, probably being not able to preach to them any longer, because of his extreme old age,) he does not treat directly of faith, which St. Paul had done; neither of inward or outward holiness, concerning which, both St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter had spoken: but of the foundation of all, the happy and holy Communion which the faithful have with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

3. In the preface, he describes the authority by which he wrote and spoke, chap. i. 1—4, and expressly points out the design of his present writing. To the preface exactly answers the conclusion of the Epistle, more largely explaining the same design, and recapitulating the marks of our communion with God, by, *we know*, thrice repeated. ch. v. 18, 19, 20.

4. The tract itself treats,

First, Severally, Of communion with the Father, chap. i. ver. 5—10. Of communion with the Son, chap. ii. and iii. Of communion with the Spirit, chap. iv.

Secondly, Conjointly, Of the testimony of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; on which, faith in Christ, the being born of God, love to God and his children, the keeping his commandments, and victory over the world, are founded. chap. v. ver. 1—12.

5. The recapitulation begins. chap. v. ver. 18. "We know that he who is born of God," who sees and loves God, "sinneth not," so long as this loving faith abideth in him. "We know we are of God," children of God, by the witness and the fruit of the Spirit: "and the whole world," all who have not the Spirit, "lieth in the wicked one." They are, and live, and dwell in him, as the children of God do in the Holy One. "We know that the Son of God is come; and hath given us" a spiritual "understanding, that we may know the true One," the faithful and true Witness. "And we are in the true One," as branches in the vine. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

In considering these important words, we may inquire,

I. How is He the true God?

II. How is He eternal Life? I shall then,

III. Add a few inferences.

1. And first we may inquire, How is he the true God? He is "God over all, blessed for ever." "He was with God," with God the Father, "from the beginning," from eternity, "and was God. He and the Father are One;" and, consequently, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Accordingly, the inspired writers give him all the titles of the Most High God. They call him over and over, by the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH, never given to any creature. They ascribe to him all the attributes, and all the works of God. So that we need not scruple to call him "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty coeternal."

2. He is *the true God*, the only Cause, the sole Creator of all things. "By him," saith the Apostle Paul, "were created all things that are in heaven, and that are on earth:" yea, earth and heaven themselves; but the inhabitants are named, because more noble than the house, *visible* and *invisible*. The several species of which are subjoined: "Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers." So St. John, "All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." And accordingly St. Paul applies to him those strong words of the Psalmist, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands."

3. And as *the true God*, he is also the *Supporter* of all the things that he hath made. He *beareth*, upholdeth, sustaineth, *all* created *things by the word of his power:* by the same powerful word, which brought them out of nothing. As this was absolutely necessary for the beginning of their existence, it is equally so for the continuance of it: were his almighty influence withdrawn, they could not subsist a moment longer. Hold up a stone in the air; the moment you withdraw your hand, it naturally falls to the ground. In like manner, were he to withdraw his hand for a moment, the creation would fall into nothing.

4. As the *true God*, he is likewise the *Preserver* of all things. He not only keeps them in being, but preserves them in that degree of

well-being, which is suitable to their several natures. He preserves them in their several relations, connexions, and dependencies, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will. How strongly and beautifully is this expressed: τα παντα εν αυτω συνεστηκε· "By whom all things consist:" or, more literally, *By and in him are all things compacted into one system.* He is not only the support, but also the cement of the whole universe.

5. I would particularly remark, (what perhaps has not been sufficiently observed,) that he is the true *Author of all* the *motion* that is in the universe. To spirits, indeed, he has given a small degree of self-moving power, but not to matter. All matter, of whatever kind it be, is absolutely and totally inert. It does not, cannot, in any case, move itself; and whenever any part of it seems to move, it is in reality moved by something else. See that log, which, vulgarly speaking, *moves* on the sea! It is in reality *moved* by the water. The water is moved by the wind, that is, a current of air. And the air itself owes all its motion to the ethereal fire, a particle of which is attached to every particle of it. Deprive it of that fire, and it moves no longer; it is fixed; it is as inert as sand. Remove fluidity (owing to the ethereal fire intermixed with it) from water, and it has no more motion than a log. Impact fire into iron, by hammering it when red hot, and it has no more motion than fixed air, or frozen water. But when it is unfixed, when it is in its most active state, what gives motion to fire? The very heathen will tell you. It is,

Magnam Mens agitans molem, et vasto se corpore miscens.

6. To pursue this a little farther. We say, the moon moves round the earth, the earth and the other planets move round the sun, the sun moves round its own axis. But these are only vulgar expressions. For if we speak the truth, neither the sun, moon, nor stars *move.* None of these move themselves. They are all *moved* every moment by the Almighty hand that made them.

"Yes," says Sir Isaac, "the sun, moon, and all the heavenly bodies, do move, do *gravitate* toward each other." Gravitate! What is that? Why, they all *attract* each other, in proportion to the quantity of matter they contain. "Nonsense all over," says Mr. Hutchinson; "jargon, self-contradiction! Can any thing *act*, where it is not? No, they are continually *impelled* toward each other." Impelled! by what? "By the subtle matter, the ether or electric fire." But, remember! be it ever so subtle, it is matter still: consequently, it is as inert in itself as either sand or marble. It cannot, therefore, move itself, but, probably, it is the first material mover, the main spring whereby the Creator and Preserver of all things is pleased to move the universe.

7. *The true God* is also the *Redeemer* of all the children of men. It pleased the Father to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, that by the one oblation of himself once offered, when he tasted death for

every man, he might make a full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

8. Again. The true God is *the Governor* of all things: "his kingdom ruleth over all." "The government rests upon his shoulder," throughout all ages. He is the Lord and Disposer of the whole creation, and every part of it. And in how astonishing a manner does he govern the world! How far are his ways above human thought! How little do we know of his methods of government! Only this we know, "Ita præsides singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!" Thou presidest over each creature, as if it were the universe, and over the universe, as over each individual creature. Dwell a little upon this sentiment: what a glorious mystery does it contain! It is paraphrased from the words recited above:

> "FATHER, how wide thy glories shine!"
> Lord of the universe—and mine:
> Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
> As all the world were but one soul:
> Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
> As I remain'd thy single care!"

9. And yet there is a difference, as was said before, in his providential government over the children of men. A pious writer observes, There is a three-fold circle of Divine Providence. The *outermost circle* includes all the sons of men, Heathens, Mahometans, Jews, and Christians. He causeth his sun to rise upon all. He giveth them rain and fruitful seasons. He pours ten thousand benefits upon them, and fills their hearts with food and gladness. With an *interior circle*, he encompasses the whole visible Christian Church, all that name the name of Christ. He has an additional regard to these, and a nearer attention to their welfare. But the innermost circle of his providence encloses only the invisible Church of Christ; all real Christians, wherever dispersed in all corners of the earth! all that worship God (whatever denomination they are of) in spirit and in truth. He keeps these as the apple of an eye: he hides them under the shadow of his wings. And it is to these, in particular, that our Lord says, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

10. Lastly, Being *the true God*, he is *the end* of all things, according to that solemn declaration of the Apostle, (Rom. xi. 36,) "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" *of him*, as the Creator; *through him*, as the Sustainer and Preserver; and *to him*, as the ultimate end of all.

II. In all these senses, Jesus Christ is *the true God*. But how is he *Eternal Life?*

1. The thing directly intended in this expression, is not that he *will be* eternal life: although this is a great and important truth, and never to be forgotten. "He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." He is the Purchaser of that "crown of life," which

will be given to all that are "faithful unto death." And he will be the soul of all their joys to all the saints in glory.

"The flame of angelical love
Is kindled at Jesus's face;
And all the enjoyment above,
Consists in the rapturous gaze!"

2. The thing directly intended, is not, That he is the resurrection: although this also is true, according to his own declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life:" agreeable to which are St. Paul's words, "As in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So that we may well say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

3. But waving what he *will be* hereafter, we are here called to consider, what he *is now*. He is now the Life of every thing that lives, in any kind and degree. He is the Source of the lowest species of life, that of *vegetables;* as being the Source of all the motion on which vegetation depends. He is the Fountain of the life of *animals;* the Power by which the heart beats, and the circulating juices flow. He is the Fountain of all the life which man possesses, in common with other animals. And if we distinguish the *rational* from the animal life, he is the Source of this also.

4. But how infinitely short does all this fall of the life which is here directly intended, and of which the Apostle speaks so explicitly in the preceding verses! (ver. 11, 12.) This is the testimony, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, (the eternal life here spoken of,) "and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not" this "life." As if he had said, *This is* the sum of *the testimony which God hath* testified *of his Son, that God hath given us*, not only a title to, but the real beginning of *eternal life. And this life is* purchased by, and treasured up *in his Son:* who has all the springs and the fulness of it in himself, to communicate to his body, the Church.

5. This eternal life then commences, when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts: when we first know Christ, being enabled to "call him Lord by the Holy Ghost:" when we can testify, our conscience bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, "the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And then it is that happiness begins, happiness real, solid, substantial. Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper, heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind; general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits, lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state; an entire, clear, full acquiescence in the whole will of God, enabling us to "rejoice evermore, and in every thing to give thanks."

6. As our knowledge and our love of him increase, by the same

degrees, and in the same proportion, the kingdom of an inward heaven must necessarily increase also; while we "grow up in all things into him, who is our head." And when we are Εν αυτω πεπληρωμενοι, *complete in him*, as our translators render it; but more properly, when we are *filled with him*, when "Christ in us the hope of glory," is our God and our All, when he has taken the full possession of our heart: when he reigns therein without a rival, the Lord of every motion there: when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; then we are completely happy; then we live all "the life that is hid with Christ in God." Then, and not till then, we properly experience what that word meaneth, "God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

III. I have now only to add a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And we may learn from hence, First, That as there is but one God in heaven above and in the earth beneath, so there is only one happiness for created spirits, either in heaven or earth. This one God made our heart for himself; and it cannot rest, till it resteth in him. It is true, that while we are in the vigour of youth and health; while our blood dances in our veins; while the world smiles upon us, and we have all the conveniences, yea, and superfluities of life; we frequently have pleasing dreams, and enjoy a kind of happiness. But it cannot continue: it flies away like a shadow: and even while it does continue, it is not solid, or substantial; it does not satisfy the soul. We still pant after something else, something which we have not. Give a man every thing that this world can give, still, as Horace observed near two thousand years ago,

Curtæ nescio quid Semper abest rei.

Still—

"Amidst our plenty something still
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!"

That *something*, is neither more nor less, than the knowledge and love of God: without which no spirit can be happy, either in heaven or earth.

2. Permit me to cite my own experience in confirmation of this: I distinctly remember, that, even in my childhood, even when I was at school, I have often said, 'They say, the life of a schoolboy is the happiest in the world: but I am sure, I am not happy. For I am not content, and so cannot be happy.' When I had lived a few years longer, being in the vigour of youth, a stranger to pain and sickness, and particularly to lowness of spirits, (which I do not remember to have felt one quarter of an hour ever since I was born:) having plenty of all things, in the midst of sensible and amiable friends, who loved me, and I loved them, and being in the way of life, which, of all others, suited my inclinations; still I was not happy! I wondered why I was not, and could not imagine, what the reason

was! The reason certainly was, I did not know God: the source of present, as well as eternal happiness. What is a clear proof that I was not then happy, is, that upon the coolest reflection, I knew not one week which I would have thought it worth while to have lived over again: taking it with every inward and outward sensation, without any variation at all.

3. But a pious man affirms, "When I was young, I was happy, though I was utterly without God in the world." I do not believe you: though I doubt not but you believe yourself. But you are deceived, as I have been over and over. Such is the condition of human life!

> "Flowrets and myrtles fragrant seem to rise:
> All is at distance fair; but near at hand,
> The gay deceit mocks the desiring eyes
> With thorns, and desert-heath, and barren sand."

Look forward on any distant prospect; how beautiful does it appear! Come up to it; and the beauty vanishes away, and it is rough and disagreeable. Just so is life! But when the scene is past, it resumes its former appearance: and we seriously believe, that we were then very happy, though, in reality, we were far otherwise. For as none is now, so none ever was happy, without the loving knowledge of the true God.

4. We may learn hence, Secondly, That this happy knowledge of the true God is only another name for *religion:* I mean *Christian religion*, which, indeed, is the only one that deserves the name. Religion, as to the nature or essence of it, does not lie in this or that set of notions, vulgarly called *faith;* nor in a round of duties, however carefully *reformed* from error and superstition. It does not consist in any number of outward actions. No: it properly and directly consists in the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his Love, through the eternal Spirit. And this naturally leads to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work.

5. We learn hence, Thirdly, That none but a Christian is happy; none but a real, inward Christian. A glutton, a drunkard, a gamester may be *merry;* but he cannot be happy. The beau, the belle, may eat and drink, and rise up to play; but still they feel they are not happy. Men or women may adorn their own dear persons with all the colours of the rainbow. They may dance, and sing, and hurry to and fro, and flutter hither and thither. They may roll up and down in their splendid carriages, and talk insipidly to each other. They may hasten from one diversion to another: but happiness is not there. They are still "walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain." One of their own poets has truly pronounced, concerning the whole life of these sons of pleasure,

> "'Tis a dull farce, an empty show:
> Powder, and pocket-glass, and beau."

I cannot but observe of that fine Writer, that he came near the

mark: and yet fell short of it. In his Solomon, (one of the noblest poems in the English tongue,) he clearly shows where happiness *is not;* that it is not to be found in natural knowledge, in power, or in the pleasures of sense or imagination. But he does not show where it is to be found. He could not; for he did not know it himself. Yet he came near it, when he said,

> "Restore, Great Father, thy instructed son;
> And in my act may thy great will be done!"

6. We learn hence, Fourthly, That every Christian is happy, and that he who is not happy is not a Christian. If, as was observed above, religion is happiness, every one that has it must be happy. This appears from the very nature of the thing: for if religion and happiness are in fact the same, it is impossible that any man can possess the former, without possessing the latter also. He cannot have religion without having happiness, seeing they are utterly inseparable.

And it is equally certain, on the other hand, that he who is not happy, is not a Christian: seeing if he was a real Christian, he could not but be happy. But I allow an exception here, in favour of those, who are under violent temptation; yea, and of those who are under deep nervous disorders, which are, indeed, a species of insanity. The clouds and darkness which then overwhelm the soul, suspend its happiness; especially if Satan is permitted to second those disorders, by pouring in his fiery darts. But, excepting these cases, the observation will hold, and it should be well attended to; whoever is not happy, yea, happy in God, is not a Christian.

7. Are not *you* a living proof of this? Do not you still wander to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none?—Pursuing happiness, but never overtaking it? And who can blame you for pursuing it? It is the very end of your being. The great Creator made nothing to be miserable, but every creature to be happy in its kind. And upon a general review of the works of his hands he pronounced them all *very good:* which they would not have been, had not every intelligent creature, yea, every one capable of pleasure and pain, been happy in answering the end of its creation. If *you* are now unhappy, it is because you are in an unnatural state: and shall you not sigh for deliverance from it? "The whole creation" being now "subject to vanity, groaneth and travaileth in pain together." I blame you only, or pity you rather, for taking a wrong way to a right end: for seeking happiness where it never was, and never can be found. You seek happiness in your fellow-creatures, instead of your Creator. But these can no more make you happy, than they can make you immortal. If you have ears to hear, every creature cries aloud, "Happiness is not in me." All these are, in truth, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." O turn unto your rest! Turn to him, in whom are hid all the treasures of happiness! Turn unto him, "who giveth liberally unto all men," and he will give you "to drink of the water of life freely."

8. You cannot find your long-sought happiness in all the *pleasures of the world.* Are they not "deceitful upon the weights?" Are they not "lighter than vanity" *itself?* How long will ye "feed upon that which is not bread?" Which may *amuse*, but cannot satisfy. You cannot find it in the *religion of the world:* either in opinions, or a mere round of outward duties. Vain labour! Is not *God a Spirit?* And, therefore, to be "worshipped in Spirit and in truth?" In this alone can you find the happiness you seek: in the union of your spirit with the Father of Spirits. In the knowledge and love of him who is the fountain of happiness, sufficient for all the souls he has made.

9. But where is he to be found? Shall we "go up into heaven," or "down into hell" to seek him? Shall we "take the wings of the morning," and search for him "in the uttermost parts of the sea?" Nay, *Quod petis, hic est!* What a strange word, to fall from the pen of a heathen! "What you seek, is here!" He is "about your bed!" He is "about your path." He "besets you behind and before." He "lays his hand upon you." Lo! God is here! Not afar off! Now, believe and feel him near! May he now reveal himself in your heart! Know him! Love him! and you are happy.

10. Are you already happy in him? Then see that you "hold fast whereunto ye have attained!" "Watch and pray," that you may never be "moved from your steadfastness." "Look unto yourselves, that ye lose not what ye have gained, but that ye receive a full reward." In so doing, expect a continual growth in grace, in the loving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Expect that the power of the Highest shall suddenly overshadow you, that all sin may be destroyed, and nothing may remain in your heart, but holiness unto the Lord. And this moment, and every moment, "present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," and "glorify him with your body and with your spirit, which are God's."

SERMON LXXXIII.

ON SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY.

"*Little Children, keep yourselves from Idols.*"—1 JOHN v. 21.

1. THERE are two words that occur several times in this Epistle, παιδια and τεκνια, both of which our translators render by the same expression, *little Children.* But their meaning is very different. The former is very properly rendered *little Children:* for it means, *Babes in Christ:* those that have lately tasted of his love, and are, as yet,

weak and unestablished therein. The latter might with more propriety be rendered, *Beloved Children;* as it does not denote any more than the affection of the speaker to those whom he had begotten in the Lord.

2. An ancient Historian relates, that when the Apostle was so enfeebled by age as not to be able to preach, he was frequently brought into the congregation in his chair, and just uttered, "Beloved children, love one another." He could not have given a more important advice. And equally important is this which lies before us; equally necessary for every part of the Church of Christ. "Beloved children, keep yourselves from idols."

3. Indeed there is a close connexion between them: one cannot subsist without the other. As there is no firm foundation for the love of our brethren, except the love of God, so there is no possibility of loving God, except we *keep* ourselves *from idols.*

But what are the *Idols* of which the Apostle speaks? This is the First thing to be considered. We may then, in the Second place, inquire, How shall we keep ourselves from them?

I. 1. We are first to consider, What are the idols of which the Apostle speaks? I do not conceive him to mean, at least not principally, the idols that were worshipped by the heathens. They to whom he was writing, whether they had been Jews or heathens, were not in much danger from these. There is no probability, that the Jews now converted, had ever been guilty of worshipping them: as deeply given to this gross idolatry as the Israelites had been for many ages, they were hardly ever entangled therein after their return from the Babylonish captivity. From that period the whole body of Jews had shown a constant, deep abhorrence of it: and the heathens, after they had once turned to the living God, had their former idols in the utmost destestation. They abhorred to touch the unclean thing; yea, they chose to lay down their lives, rather than turn to the worship of those gods, whom they now knew to be devils.

2. Neither can we reasonably suppose, that he speaks of those idols that are now worshipped in the Church of Rome: whether angels, or the souls of departed saints, or images of gold, silver, wood, or stone. None of these idols were known in the Christian Church, till some centuries after the time of the Apostles. Once, indeed, St. John himself, "fell down to worship before the face of an angel," that spake unto him; probably mistaking him, from his glorious appearance, for the great Angel of the Covenant. But the strong reproof of the angel, which immediately followed, secured the Christians from imitating that bad example: "See thou do it not;" as glorious as I appear, I am not thy Master. "I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets: worship God." Rev. xxii. 9.

3. Setting then Pagan and Romish idols aside, what are those of which we are here warned by the Apostle? The preceding words show us the meaning of these. *This is the true God;* the end of all the souls he has made; the centre of all created spirits: *and eternal life*, the only foundation of present as well as eternal happiness. To

him, therefore, alone, our heart is due. And he cannot, he will not quit his claim, or consent to its being given to any other. He is continually saying to every child of man, "My son, give me thy heart!" and to give our heart to any other is plain idolatry. Accordingly, whatever takes our heart from him, or shares it with him, is an idol: or, in other words, whatever we seek happiness in, independent of God.

4. Take an instance that occurs almost every day. A person who has been long involved in the world, surrounded and fatigued with abundance of business, having at length acquired an easy fortune, disengages himself from all business, and retires into the country—to be happy. Happy in what? Why in taking his ease. For he intends now,

> ————*Somno et inertibus horis*
> *Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.*
> ————To sleep, and pass away,
> In gentle inactivity, the day!

Happy in eating and drinking whatever his heart desires: perhaps more elegant fare than that of the old Roman, who feasted his imagination before the treat was served up: who, before he left the town, consoled himself with the thought, of "fat bacon and cabbage too!"

> *Uncta satis pingui ponentur oluscula lardo!*

Happy,—in altering, enlarging, rebuilding, or at least decorating, the old mansion-house he has purchased: and likewise in improving every thing about it; the stables, out-houses, grounds. But, meantime, where does God come in? Nowhere at all. He did not think about him. He no more thought of the King of Heaven, than of the king of France. God is not in his plan. The knowledge and love of God are entirely out of the question. Therefore, this whole scheme of happiness in retirement is idolatry from beginning to end.

5. If we descend to particulars, the first species of this idolatry is what St. John terms, *the desire of the flesh.* We are apt to take this in too narrow a meaning, as if it related to one of the senses only. Not so: this expression equally refers to all the outward senses. It means, the seeking happiness in the gratification of any, or all of the external senses: although more particularly of the three lower senses, tasting, smelling, and feeling. It means, the seeking happiness herein, if not in a gross, indelicate manner, by open intemperance, by gluttony or drunkenness, or shameless debauchery; yet in a regular kind of epicurism; in a genteel sensuality; in such an elegant course of self-indulgence, as does not disorder either the head or the stomach; as does not at all impair our health, or blemish our reputation.

6. But we must not imagine this species of idolatry is confined to the rich and great. In this also, "the toe of the peasant," (as our poet speaks,) "treads upon the heel of the courtier." Thousands in low, as well as in high life, sacrifice to this idol: seeking their happiness, (though in a more humble manner,) in gratifying their outward senses. It is true, their meat, their drink, and the objects

that gratify their other senses, are of a coarser kind. But still they make up all the happiness they either have or seek, and usurp the hearts which are due to God.

7. The second species of idolatry mentioned by the Apostle, is, *the desire of the eye*, that is, the seeking of happiness in gratifying the imagination; (chiefly by means of the eyes,) that internal sense, which is as natural to men as either sight or hearing. This is gratified by such objects as are either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon. But as to grand objects, it seems they do not please any longer than they are new. Were we to survey the Pyramids of Egypt daily for a year, what pleasure would they then give? Nay, what pleasure does a far grander object than these,

> "The ocean rolling on the shelly shore,"

give to one who has been long accustomed to it? Yea, what pleasure do we generally receive from the grandest object in the universe,

> — — — — "Yon ample, azure sky,
> Terribly large, and wonderfully bright,
> With stars unnumber'd, and unmeasur'd light?"

8. Beautiful objects are the next general source of the pleasures of the imagination: the works of nature in particular. So persons in all ages have been delighted

> "With sylvan scenes, and hill and dale,
> And liquid lapse of murmuring streams."

Others are pleased with adding art to nature, as in gardens, with their various ornaments: others with mere works of art, as buildings, and representations of nature, whether in statues or paintings. Many, likewise, find pleasure in beautiful *apparel*, or *furniture* of various kinds. But novelty must be added to beauty, as well as to grandeur, or it soon palls upon the sense.

9. Are we to refer to the head of beauty, the pleasure which many take in a *favourite animal?* Suppose a sparrow, a parrot, a cat, a lap-dog? Sometimes it may be owing to this. At other times, none but the person pleased can find any beauty at all in the favourite. Nay, perchance it is, in the eyes of all other persons, superlatively ugly. In this case, the pleasure seems to arise from mere whim or caprice; that is, madness.

10. Must we not refer to the head of novelty, chiefly, the pleasure found in most *diversions* and *amusements;* which, were we to repeat them daily but a few months, would be utterly flat and insipid? To the same head, we may refer the pleasure that is taken in *collecting curiosities;* whether they are natural or artificial, whether old or new. This sweetens the labours of the virtuoso, and makes all his labour light.

But it is not chiefly to novelty, that we are to impute the pleasure

we receive from *music*. Certainly this has an intrinsic beauty, as well as frequently an intrinsic grandeur. This is a beauty and grandeur of a peculiar kind, not easy to be expressed: nearly related to the sublime and the beautiful in *poetry*, which give an exquisite pleasure. And yet it may be allowed that novelty heightens the pleasure which arises from any of these sources.

12. From the study of *languages*, from *criticism*, and from *history*, we receive a pleasure of a mixed nature. In all these, there is always something new: frequently something beautiful or sublime. And history not only gratifies the imagination in all these respects, but likewise pleases us by touching our passions, our love, desire, joy, pity. The last of these gives us a strong pleasure, though strangely mixed with a kind of pain. So that one need not wonder at the exclamation of a fine poet,

> "What is all mirth but turbulence unholy,
> When to the charms compared of heavenly melancholy?"

13. The love of novelty is immeasurably gratified by *experimental philosophy:* and, indeed, by every branch of *natural philosophy*, which opens an immense field for still new discoveries. But is there not likewise a pleasure therein, as well as in *mathematical* and *metaphysical* studies, which does not result from the imagination, but from the exercise of the understanding? Unless we will say, that the newness of the discoveries which we make by mathematical, or metaphysical researches, is one reason, at least, if not the chief, of the pleasure we receive therefrom.

14. I dwell the longer on these things, because so very few see them in the true point of view. The generality of men, and more particularly, men of sense and learning, are so far from suspecting that there is, or can be, the least harm in them, that they seriously believe, it is matter of great praise, to *give ourselves wholly to them.* Who of them, for instance, would not admire and commend the indefatigable industry of that great Philosopher, who says, "I have now been eight and thirty years at my parish of Upminster; and I have made it clear, that there are no less than three and fifty species of butterflies therein. But if God should spare my life a few years longer, I do not doubt but I should demonstrate there are five and fifty!" I allow that most of these studies have their use, and that it is possible to *use*, without *abusing* them. But if we seek our happiness in any of these things, then it commences an *idol.* And the enjoyment of it, however it may be admired and applauded by the world, is condemned by God as neither better nor worse than damnable *idolatry.*

15. The third kind of *love of the world*, the Apostle speaks of under that uncommon expression, η αλαζονεια του βιου· This is rendered by our translators, *The Pride of Life.* It is usually supposed to mean, the pomp and splendour of those that are in high life. But has it not a more extensive sense? Does it not rather mean, the seek-

ing happiness in the praise of men, which, above all things, engenders pride? When this is pursued in a more pompous way, by kings, or illustrious men, we call it, *thirst for glory:* when it is sought in a lower way by ordinary men, it is styled, *taking care of our reputation.* In plain terms, it is seeking the honour that cometh of men, instead of that which *cometh of God only.*

16. But what creates a difficulty here, is this: We are required, not only to "give no offence to any one," and to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," but to "please all men for their good to edification." But how difficult is it to do this, with a single eye to God? We ought to do all that in us lies, to prevent "the good that is in us from being evil spoken of." Yea, we ought to value a clear reputation, if it be given us, only less than a good conscience. But yet, if we seek our happiness therein, we are liable to perish in our idolatry.

17. To which of the preceding heads is the *love of money* to be referred? Perhaps sometimes to one, and sometimes to another, as it is a means of procuring gratifications, either for "the desire of the flesh," for the "desire of the eyes," or for "the pride of life." In any of these cases, money is only pursued, in order to a farther end. But it is sometimes pursued for its own sake, without any farther view. One who is properly a miser, loves and seeks money for its own sake. He looks no farther, but places his happiness in the acquiring or the possessing of it. And this is a species of idolatry, distant from all the preceding; and indeed the lowest, basest idolatry, of which the human soul is capable. To seek happiness either in gratifying this, or any other of the desires above mentioned, is effectually to renounce the true God, and to set up an idol in his place. In a word, so many objects as there are in the world, wherein men seek happiness instead of seeking it in God, so many *idols* they set up in their hearts; so many species of *idolatry* they practise.

18. I would take notice of only one more, which, though it in some measure falls in with several of the preceding, yet, in many respects, is distinct from them all; I mean, the idolizing a human creature. Undoubtedly it is the will of God that we should all love one another. It is his will, that we should love our relations and our Christian brethren with a peculiar love: and those in particular, whom he has made particularly profitable to our souls. These we are commanded to "love fervently;" yet still "with a pure heart." But is not this "impossible with man?" To retain the strength and tenderness of affection, and yet, without any stain to the soul, with unspotted purity? I do not mean only unspotted by lust. I know, this is possible. I know a person may have an unutterable affection for another, without any desire of this kind. But is it without idolatry? Is it not loving the creature more than the Creator? Is it not putting a man or woman in the place of God? Giving them your heart? Let this be carefully considered, even by those whom God has joined together; by husbands and wives, parents and children.

It cannot be denied, that these ought to love one another tenderly: they are commanded so to do. But they are neither commanded, nor permitted, to love one another idolatrously. Yet how common is this! How frequently is a husband, a wife, a child, put in the place of God! How many that are accounted good Christians, fix their affections on each other, so as to leave no place for God! They seek their happiness in the creature, not in the Creator. One may truly say to the other,

"I view thee, lord and end of my desires."

That is, "I desire nothing more but thee! Thou art the thing that I long for! All my desire is unto thee, and unto the remembrance of thy name." Now, if this is not flat idolatry, I cannot tell what is.

II. Having largely considered, What those *Idols* are, of which the Apostle speaks, I come now to inquire, (which may be done more briefly,) How we may *keep ourselves from them.*

1. In order to this, I would advise you, first, Be deeply convinced that none of them bring happiness; that no thing, no person under the sun, no, nor the amassment of all together, can give any solid, satisfactory happiness, to any child of man. The world itself, the giddy, thoughtless world, acknowledge this unawares, while they allow, nay, vehemently maintain, "No man upon earth is contented." The very same observation was made near two thousand years ago,

——— *Nemo quam sibi sortem*
Seu ratio dederit, seu sors objecerit, illâ
Contentus vivat.

Let Fortune or let Choice the station give
To man, yet none on earth contented live.

And if no man upon earth is contented, it is certain, no man is happy. For whatever station we are in, discontent is incompatible with happiness.

2. Indeed not only the giddy, but the thinking part of the world allow, that no man is contented: the melancholy proofs of which we see on every side, in high and low, rich and poor. And, generally, the more understanding they have, the more discontented they are. For,

"They know with more distinction to complain,
And have superior sense, in feeling pain."

It is true, every one has (to use the cant term of the day; and an excellent one it is) *his hobby-horse!* Something that pleases the greatest boy for a few hours or days, and wherein he *hopes* to be happy. But though

"Hope blooms eternal in the human breast,
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

Still he is walking in a vain shadow, which will soon vanish away! So that universal experience, both our own, and that of all our friends and acquaintance, clearly proves, that as God made our hearts for himself, so they cannot rest till they rest in him: that till we acquaint ourselves with him, we cannot be at peace. As "a scorner" of the wisdom of God, "seeketh wisdom and findeth it not;" so a scorner of happiness in God, seeketh happiness, but findeth none.

3. When you are thoroughly convinced of this, I advise you, Secondly, Stand and consider what you are about. Will you be a fool and a madman all your days? Is it not high time to come to your senses? At length, awake out of sleep, and shake yourself from the dust! Break loose from this miserable idolatry, and "choose the better part." Steadily resolve, to seek happiness where it may be found; where it cannot be sought in vain. Resolve to seek it in the true God, the Fountain of all blessedness! And cut off all delay. Straightway put in execution what you have resolved! Seeing "all things are ready," "acquaint thyself now with him, and be at peace."

4. But do not either resolve or attempt to execute your resolution, trusting in your own strength. If you do, you will be utterly foiled. You are not able to contend with the evil world, much less with your own evil heart; and least of all, with the powers of darkness. Cry, therefore, to the Strong for strength. Under a deep sense of your own weakness and helplessness, "trust thou in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength." I advise you to cry to him for repentance in particular, not only for a full consciousness of your own impotence, but for a piercing sense of the exceeding guilt, baseness, and madness of the idolatry that has long swallowed you up: cry for a thorough knowledge of yourself, of all your sinfulness and guiltiness. Pray that you may fully be discovered to yourself: that you may know yourself as also you are known. When once you are possessed of this genuine conviction, all your idols will lose their charms. And you will wonder, how you could so long lean upon those broken reeds, which had so often sunk under you.

5. What should you ask for next?

> "Jesus, now I have lost my All,
> Let me upon thy bosom fall!"

Now let me see Thee in thy vesture dipped in blood!

> "Now stand in all thy wounds confest;
> And wrap me in thy crimson vest!"

Hast thou not said, "If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" Lord, *I would* believe! *Help thou mine unbelief!* And help me *now!* Help me now to enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God! For those who give thee their heart, their whole heart! Who receive thee as their God and their All! O thou that

art fairer than the children of men, full of grace are thy lips! Speak that I may see thee! And as the shadows flee before the sun, so let all my idols vanish at thy presence!

6. From the moment that you begin to experience this, fight the good fight of faith: take the kingdom of heaven by violence! Take it as it were by storm. Deny yourself every pleasure that you are not divinely conscious brings you nearer to God. Take up your cross daily; regard no pain, if it lies in your way to him. If you are called thereto, scruple not to pluck out the right eye and cast it from you. Nothing is impossible to him that believeth: you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. Do valiantly, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free. Yea, go on in his Name and in the power of his might, till you "know all that love of God that passeth knowledge." And then you have only to wait till he shall call you into his everlasting kingdom!

SERMON LXXXIV.

ON DISSIPATION.

"*This I speak—that ye may attend upon the* LORD *without distraction.*"
1 CORINTHIANS vii. 35.

1. ALMOST in every part of our nation, more especially in the large and populous towns, we hear a general complaint, among sensible persons, of the still increasing *dissipation.* It is observed to diffuse itself more and more in the court, the city, and the country. From the continual mention which is made of this, and the continual declamations against it, one would naturally imagine that a word so commonly used was perfectly understood. Yet it may be doubted whether it be or not. Nay, we may very safely affirm, that few of those who frequently use the term, understand what it means. One reason of this is, that although the thing has been long among us, especially since the time of King Charles the Second, (one of the most dissipated mortals that ever breathed,) yet the word is not of long standing. It was hardly heard of fifty years ago; and not much before the present reign. So lately has it been imported: and yet it is so in every one's mouth, that it is already worn threadbare, being one of the cant words of the day.

2. Another reason why it is so little understood may be, that among the numberless writers that swarm about us, there is not one, (at least whom I have seen) that has published so much as a six-

11. *Distraction*, in St. Paul's sense, is nearly allied to, or rather the same with dissipation: consequently, to attend upon the Lord *without distraction*, is the same as to attend upon the Lord *without dissipation*. But whenever the mind is unhinged from God, it is so far dissipated or distracted. Dissipation then, in general, may be defined, the uncentering the soul from God. And whatever uncentres the mind from God does properly dissipate us.

12. Hence we may easily learn, what is the proper direct meaning of that common expression, a *dissipated man*. He is a man that is separated from God, that is disunited from his centre, whether this be occasioned by hurry of business, by seeking honour or preferment, or by fondness for diversions, for silly pleasures so called, or for any trifle under the sun. The vulgar, it is true, commonly confine this character to those who are violently attached to women, gaming, drinking; to dancing, balls, races, or the poor childish diversion of "running foxes and hares out of breath." But it equally belongs to the serious fool who forgets God, by a close attention to any worldly employment, suppose it were of the most elegant, or of the most important kind. A man may be as much dissipated from God by the study of the Mathematics or Astronomy, as by fondness for cards or hounds. Whoever is habitually inattentive to the presence and will of his Creator, he is a *dissipated* man.

13. Hence we may likewise learn, that a *dissipated life* is not barely that of a powdered beau, of a petit-maitre, a gamester, a woman-hunter, a play-house hunter, a fox-hunter, or a shatterbrain of any kind; but the life of an honourable statesman, a gentleman, or a merchant, that is *without God in the world*. Agreeably to this, a *dissipated age*, (such as is the present, perhaps beyond all that ever were, at least, that are recorded in history,) is an age wherein God is generally forgotten. And *a dissipated nation*, (such as England is at present in a superlative degree,) is a nation, a vast majority of which have not God "in all their thoughts."

14. A plain consequence of these observations is, (what some may esteem a paradox,) That *Dissipation*, in the full, general meaning of the word, is the very same thing with *ungodliness*. The name is new; but the thing is, undoubtedly, almost as old as the creation. And this is, at present, the peculiar glory of England, wherein it is not equalled by any nation under heaven. We, therefore, speak an unquestionable truth when we say, There is not on the face of the earth, another nation, (at least that we ever heard of,) so perfectly *dissipated* and *ungodly;* not only so totally without God in the world, but so openly setting him at defiance. There never was an *age* that we read of in history, since Julius Cæsar, since Noah, since Adam, wherein dissipation or ungodliness did so generally prevail, both among high and low, rich and poor.

15. But still, blessed be God!

> "All are not lost; there be who faith
> Prefer, and piety to God!"

There are some, I trust more than *seven thousand*, yea, or ten times that number in England, *who have not* yet *bowed* either *their knee* or their heart, to the god of this world; who, cleaving close to the God of heaven, are not borne away by the flood, by the general, the almost universal torrent of *Dissipation* or ungodliness. They are not of the mind of gentle Crispus,

Qui nunquam direxit brachia contra Torrentem:

"Who never attempted to swim against the stream." They dare swim against the stream. Each of them can truly say,

Non me, qui cætera vincit
Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.

If they cannot turn the tide back, they can at least, bear an open testimony against it. They are, therefore, free from the blood of their ungodly countrymen: it must be upon their own head.

16. But by what means may we avoid the being carried away by the overflowing stream of *Dissipation?* It is not difficult for those who believe the Scripture, to give an answer to this question. Now, I really believe the Bible to be the word of God: and on that supposition I answer, The radical cure of all dissipation, is the "faith that worketh by love." If, therefore, you would be free from this evil disease, first, "continue steadfast in the faith;" in that *faith* which brings "the Spirit of adoption, crying in your heart, Abba, Father;" whereby you are enabled to testify, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." By this faith you "see him that is invisible, and set the Lord always before you." Next, "building yourselves up in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto everlasting life." And as long as you walk by this rule, you will be superior to all Dissipation.

17. How exactly does this agree, (though there is a difference in the expression,) with that observation of pious Kempis: "Simplicity and purity are the two wings, which lift the soul up to heaven. Simplicity is in the intention, purity in the affection." For what is this but (in the Apostle's language) simple *faith working by love?* By that simplicity you always see God, and by purity you love him. What is it, but having, (as one of the ancients speaks,) "the loving eye of the soul fixed upon God?" And as long as your soul is in this posture, Dissipation can have no place.

18. It is with great judgment, therefore, that the great and good Bishop Taylor, in his "Rules of Holy Living and Dying," (of whom Bishop Warburton, a person not very prone to commend, used to say, "I have no conception of a greater genius on earth, than Dr. Jeremiah Taylor,") premises to all his other rules, those concerning purity of intention. And has he not the authority of our Lord himself so to do? who lays it down as an universal maxim, "If thine

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eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Singly aim at God: in every step thou takest, eye him alone. Pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving God. Then shall thy soul be full of light; full of the light of the glory of God, of his glorious love, shining upon thee from *the face of Jesus Christ.*

19. Can any thing be a greater help to universal holiness, than the continually seeing the light of his glory? It is no wonder then, that so many wise and good men have recommended, to all who desire to be truly religious, the exercise of the presence of God. But in doing this, some of those holy men seem to have fallen into one mistake: (particularly, an excellent writer of our own country, in his letters concerning "The Spirit of Prayer:") They put men, wholly unawakened, unconvinced of sin, upon this exercise, at their very entrance into religion: whereas, this certainly should not be the first, but rather one of the last things. They should begin with repentance, the knowledge of themselves; of their sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness. They should be instructed next, to seek peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then let them be taught to retain what they have received, to "walk in the light of his countenance;" yea, to walk "in the light as he is in the light," without any darkness at all, till "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth *them* from all sin."

20. It was from a full conviction of the absolute necessity there is, of a Christian's setting the Lord always before him, that a set of young gentlemen in Oxford, who, many years ago, used to spend most of their evenings together, in order to assist each other in working out their salvation, placed that question first, in their scheme of daily self-examination, "Have I been *simple* and *recollected* in all I said or did? Have I been *simple?* That is, setting the Lord always before me, and doing every thing with a single view of pleasing him? *Recollected*, that is, quickly gathering in my scattered thoughts, recovering my simplicity, if I had been in any wise drawn from it, by men or devils, or my own evil heart? By this means they were preserved from Dissipation, and were enabled, each of them to say, "By the grace of God, *this one thing I do*, (at least, it is my constant aim,) I see God: I love God: I serve God: I glorify him with my body and with my spirit."

21. The same thing seems to be intended by two uncommon words, which are frequently found in the writings of those pious men, who are usually styled mystics. I mean *Introversion*, and *Extroversion*. "Examine yourselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, and in them to the Christians of all ages, "Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" That is, unbelievers, unable to bear the touchstone of God's word. Now the attending to the voice of Christ within you, is what they term *Introversion*. The turning the eye of the mind from him to outward things, they call *Extroversion*. By this your thoughts wander from God, and you are properly dissipated: whereas by introversion, you may be always sensible of his loving presence; you continually hearken to whatever it pleases

your Lord to say to your heart: And if you continually listen to his inward voice, you will be kept from all dissipation.

22. We may, lastly, learn hence, what judgment to form of what is frequently urged in favour of the English nation, and of the present age, namely, that, in other respects, England stands on a level with other nations, and the present age stands upon a level with any of the preceding. Only it is allowed we are more *dissipated* than our neighbours, and this age is more dissipated than the preceding ages. Nay, if this is allowed, all is allowed. It is allowed that this nation is worse than any of the neighbouring nations: and that this age is worse, essentially worse, than any of the preceding ages. For as dissipation or ungodliness is the parent of all sin, of all unrighteousness; of unmercifulness, injustice, fraud, perfidy; of every possible evil temper, evil word, or evil action; so it, in effect, comprises them all. Whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of evil report, whatsoever things are unholy: if there be any vice, all these are included in ungodliness, usually termed Dissipation. Let not, therefore, any lover of virtue and truth say one word in favour of this monster: let no lover of mankind once open his mouth to extenuate the guilt of it. Abhor it as you would abhor the devil, whose offspring and likeness it is. Abhor it, as you would abhor the extinction of all virtue, and the universal prevalence of an earthly, sensual, devilish spirit; and flee from it as you would flee (if you saw it open before you) *from the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*.

SERMON LXXXV.

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD.

"*Ye Adulterers and Adulteresses, Know ye not that the Friendship of the World is Enmity with* God? *Whosoever, therefore, desireth to be a Friend of the World, is an Enemy of* God."—James iv. 4.

1. THERE is a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which has been often supposed to be of the same import with this: "Be not conformed to this world." chap. xii. 2. But it has little or no relation to it; it speaks of quite another thing. Indeed the supposed resemblance arises merely from the use of the word *World* in both places. This naturally leads us to think, that St. Paul means by *conformity to the world*, the same which St. James means by *friendship with the world:* whereas they are entirely different things, as the words are quite different in the original: (for St. Paul's word is αιων;

St. James's is κοσμος.) However, the words of St. Paul contain an important direction to the children of God. As if he had said, Be not conformed to either the wisdom, or the spirit, or the fashions *of the age:* of either the unconverted Jews, or the heathens, among whom ye live. You are called to show, by the whole tenor of your life and conversation, that you are "renewed in the spirit of your mind, after the image of him that created you;" and that your rule is not the example or will of man, but "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

2. But it is not strange, that St. James's caution against *Friendship with the World* should be so little understood, even among Christians. For I have not been able to learn that any author, ancient or modern, has written upon the subject: no, not (so far as I have observed) for sixteen or seventeen hundred years. Even that excellent writer, Mr. Law, who has treated so well many other subjects, has not, in all his practical treatises, written one chapter upon it. No, nor said one word, that I remember, or given one caution against it. I never heard one sermon preached upon it, either before the University or elsewhere. I never was in any company, where the conversation turned explicitly upon it, even for one hour.

3. Yet are there very few subjects of so deep importance; few that so nearly concern the very essence of religion, the life of God in the soul, the continuance and increase, or the decay, yea, extinction of it. From the want of instruction in this respect, the most melancholy consequences have followed. These, indeed, have not affected those who were still dead in trespasses and sins; but they have fallen heavy upon many of those who were truly alive to God. They have affected many of those called *Methodists* in particular, perhaps more than any other people. For want of understanding this advice of the Apostle, (I hope rather than from any contempt of it,) many among them are sick, spiritually sick, and many sleep, who were once thoroughly awakened. And it is well if they awake any more till their souls are required of them. It has appeared difficult to me, to account for what I have frequently observed: many who were once greatly alive to God, whose conversation was in heaven, who had set their affections on things above, not on things of the earth: though they walked in all the ordinances of God, though they still abounded in good works, and abstained from all known sin, yea, and from the appearance of evil; yet they gradually and insensibly decayed, (like Jonah's gourd, when the worm ate the root of it,) insomuch, that they are less alive to God now, than they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. But it is easily accounted for, if we observe, that as they increased in goods, they increased in *friendship with the world;* which, indeed, must always be the case, unless the mighty power of God interpose. But in the same proportion as they increased in this, the life of God in their soul decreased.

4. Is it strange that it should decrease, if those words are really found in the Oracles of God, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" What

is the meaning of these words? Let us seriously consider, and may God open the eyes of our understanding, that, in spite of all the mist wherewith the wisdom of the world would cover us, we may discern what is the good and acceptable will of God.

5. Let us first consider, What it is which the Apostle here means by *the World.* He does not here refer to this outward frame of things, termed in Scripture, heaven and earth; but to the inhabitants of the earth, the children of men: or at least the greater part of them. But what part? This is fully determined both by our Lord himself, and by his beloved Disciple. First, by our Lord himself. His words are, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me." John xv. 18, &c. You see here *the world* is placed on one side, and *those who are not of the world* on the other. They whom God has "chosen out of the world," namely, by "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," are set in direct opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen. Yet again: Those "who know not him that sent me," saith our Lord, who know not God, they are "*the World.*"

6. Equally express are the words of the beloved Disciple: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you: we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iii. 13. As if he had said, "You must not expect any should love you, but those that have "passed from death unto life." It follows, Those that are not passed from death unto life, that are not alive to God, are *the World.* The same we may learn from those words in the fifth chapter, ver. 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Here *the World* plainly means, those that are not of God, and who, consequently, *lie in the wicked one.*

7. Those, on the contrary, *are of God,* who love God, or at least "fear him, and keep his commandments." This is the lowest character of those that "are of God," who are not properly sons, but servants: who "depart from evil, and study to do good, and walk in all his ordinances, because they have the fear of God in their heart, and a sincere desire to please him. Fix in your heart, this plain meaning of the terms, *the World;* those who do not thus fear God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: it means neither more nor less than this.

8. But, understanding the term in this sense, what kind of friendship may we have with *the world?* We may, we ought to love them as ourselves; (for they also are included in the word *neighbour,*) to bear them real good-will; to desire their happiness as sincerely as we desire the happiness of our own souls: yea, we are in a sense to honour them, (seeing we are directed by the Apostle to "honour all men,") as the creatures of God: nay, as immortal spirits, who

are capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying him to all eternity. We are to honour them, as redeemed by his blood, who "tasted death for every man." We are to bear them tender compassion, when we see them forsaking their own mercies, wandering from the path of life, and hastening to everlasting destruction. We are never willingly to grieve their spirits, or give them any pain; but, on the contrary, to give them all the pleasure we innocently can; seeing we are to "please all men for their good." We are never to aggravate their faults; but willingly to allow all the good that is in them.

9. We may, and ought to speak to them on all occasions, in the most kind and obliging manner we can. We ought to speak no evil of them when they are absent, unless it be absolutely necessary; unless it be the only means we know of preventing their doing hurt: otherwise, we are to speak of them with all the respect we can, without transgressing the bounds of truth. We are to behave to them, when present, with all courtesy, showing them all the regard we can, without countenancing them in sin. We ought to do them all the good that is in our power, all they are willing to receive from us, following herein the example of the universal Friend, our Father which is in heaven; who, till they will condescend to receive greater blessings, gives them such as they are willing to accept: "causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending his rain on the just and on the unjust."

10. But what kind of friendship is it which we may not have with the world? May we not converse with ungodly men at all? Ought we wholly to avoid their company? By no means: the contrary of this being allowed already. If we were not to converse with them at all, "we must needs go out of the world." Then we could not show them those offices of kindness, which have been already mentioned. We may, doubtless, converse with them, first, on business; in the various purposes of this life, according to that station therein, wherein the Providence of God has placed us: secondly, When courtesy requires it; only we must take great care not to carry it too far: thirdly, When we have a reasonable hope of doing them good. But here too we have an especial need of caution, and of much prayer; otherwise, we may easily burn ourselves, in striving to pluck other brands out of the burning.

11. We may easily hurt our own souls, by sliding into a close attachment to any of them that know not God. This is the *friendship* which is "enmity with God:" we cannot be too jealous over ourselves, lest we fall into this deadly snare; lest we contract, or ever we are aware, a love of *complacence* or *delight* in them. Then only do we tread upon sure ground, when we can say with the Psalmist, "All my delight is in the saints that are upon earth, and in such as excel in virtue." We should have no *needless conversation* with them. It is our duty and our wisdom to be no oftener, and no longer with them, than is strictly necessary. And during the whole time, we have need to remember and follow the example of him

that said, "I kept my mouth, as it were, with a bridle, while the ungodly was in my sight." We should enter into no sort of connexion with them, farther than is absolutely necessary. When Jehoshaphat forgot this, and formed a connexion with Ahab, what was the consequence? He first lost his substance: "the ships" they sent out "were broken at Ezion-geber." And when he was not content with this warning, as well as that of the prophet Micaiah, but would go up with him at Ramoth-gilead, he was on the point of losing his life.

12. Above all, we should tremble at the very thought of entering into a marriage-covenant, the closest of all others, with any person who does not love, or at least fear God. This is the most horrid folly, the most deplorable madness, that a child of God could possibly plunge into; as it implies every sort of connexion with the ungodly, which a Christian is bound, in conscience, to avoid. No wonder, then, it is so flatly forbidden of God; that the prohibition is so absolute and peremptory: "Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever." Nothing can be more express. Especially if we understand by the word *unbeliever*, one that is so far from being a believer in the gospel sense, from being able to say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:" that he has not even the faith of a servant: he does not "fear God and work righteousness."

13. But for what reason is the friendship of the world so absolutely prohibited? Why are we so strictly required to abstain from it? For two general reasons: first, because it is a sin in itself; secondly, because it is attended with most dreadful consequences.

First, it is a sin in itself: and, indeed, a sin of no common dye. According to the Oracles of God, *friendship with the world*, is no less than spiritual adultery. All who are guilty of it, are addressed by the Holy Ghost in those terms, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses." It is plainly violating our marriage contract with God: by loving the creature more than the Creator. In flat contradiction to that kind command, "My son give me thine heart."

14. It is a sin of the most heinous nature, as not only implying ignorance of God, and forgetfulness of him, or inattention to him, but positive "enmity against God." It is openly, palpably such. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, can ye possibly be ignorant of this, so plain, so undeniable a truth, "that the friendship of the world is enmity against God?" Nay, and how terrible is the inference which he draws from hence! "Therefore, whosoever will be a friend of the world," (the words properly rendered are, whosoever *desireth to be a friend of the world*,) of the men who know not God, whether he attain it or not, *is*, ipso facto, *constituted an enemy of God*. This very *desire*, whether successful or not, gives him a right to that appellation.

15. And as it is a sin, a very heinous sin in itself, so it is attended with the most dreadful consequences. It frequently entangles men again in the commission of those sins, from which "they were clean escaped." It generally makes them "partakers of other men's sins,"

even those which they do not commit themselves. It gradually abates their abhorrence and dread of sin in general, and thereby prepares them for falling an easy prey to any strong temptation. It lays them open to all those sins of omission, whereof their worldly acquaintance are guilty. It insensibly lessens their exactness in private prayer, in family duty, in fasting, in attending public service, and partaking of the Lord's Supper. The indifference of those that are near them, with respect to all these, will gradually influence them: even if they say not one word, (which is hardly to be supposed,) to recommend their own practice, yet their example speaks, and is many times of more force than any other language. By this example, they are unavoidably betrayed, and almost continually, into unprofitable, yea, and into uncharitable conversation, till they no longer "set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips;" till they can join in backbiting, tale-bearing, and evil-speaking, without any check of conscience, having so frequently grieved the Holy Spirit of God, that he no longer reproves them for it: insomuch that their discourse is not now, as formerly, "seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers."

16. But these are not all the deadly consequences that result from familiar intercourse with unholy men. It not only hinders them from ordering their conversation aright, but directly tends to corrupt the heart. It tends to create or increase in us, all that pride and self-sufficiency, all that fretfulness to resent; yea, every irregular passion and wrong disposition which are indulged by their companions. It gently leads them into habitual self-indulgence, and unwillingness to deny themselves; into unreadiness to bear or take up any cross; into a softness and delicacy; into evil shame, and the fear of man, that brings numberless snares. It draws them back into the love of the world, into foolish and hurtful desires, into the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, till they are swallowed up in them. So that, in the end, the last state of these men is far worse than the first.

17. If the children of God will connect themselves with the men of the world, though the latter should not endeavour to make them like themselves, (which is a supposition by no means to be made,) yea, though they should neither design nor desire it; yet they will actually do it. I know not how to account for it, but it is a real fact, that their very spirit is infectious. While you are near them, you are apt to catch their spirit, whether they will or not. Many physicians have observed, that not only the plague, and putrid or malignant fevers, but almost every disease men are liable to, are more or less infectious. And undoubtedly so are all spiritual diseases: only with great variety. The infection is not so swiftly communicated by some as it is by others. In either case, the person already diseased, does not desire or design to infect another. The man who has the plague, does not desire or intend to communicate his distemper to you. But you are not, therefore, safe: so keep at a distance, or you will surely be infected. Does not experience show, that the case is the same

with the diseases of the mind? Suppose the proud, the vain, the passionate, the wanton, do not desire or design to infect *you* with their own distempers; yet it is best to keep at a distance from them. You are not safe when you come too near them. You will perceive, (it is well if it be not too late,) that their very breath is infectious. It has been lately discovered, that there is an atmosphere surrounding every human body, which naturally affects every one that comes within the limits of it. Is there not something analogous to this, with regard to a human spirit? If you continue long in their atmosphere, so to speak, you can hardly escape the being infected. The contagion spreads from soul to soul, as well as from body to body, even though the persons diseased do not intend or desire it. But can this reasonably be supposed? Is it not a notorious truth, that the men of the world (exceeding few excepted) eagerly desire to make their companions like themselves? Yea, and use every means, with their utmost skill and industry, to accomplish their desire. Therefore, flee for your life! Do not play with the fire, but escape before the flames kindle upon you.

18. But how many are the pleas for *Friendship with the World!* And how strong are the temptations to it! Such of these as are the most dangerous, and, at the same time, most common, we will consider.

To begin with one that is the most dangerous of all others, and, at the same time, by no means uncommon. "I grant," says one, "the person I am about to marry, is not a religious person. She does not make any pretensions to it. She has little thought about it. But she is a beautiful creature. She is extremely agreeable, and I think will make me a lovely companion."

This is a snare indeed! Perhaps one of the greatest that human nature is liable to. This is such a temptation as no power of man is able to overcome. Nothing less than the mighty power of God, can make a way for you to escape from it. And this can work a complete deliverance; his grace is sufficient for you. But not unless you are a worker together with him: not unless you deny yourself and take up your cross. And what you do, you must do at once! Nothing can be done by degrees. Whatever you do in this important case, must be done at one stroke. If it be done at all, you must, at once, cut off the right hand, and cast it from you! Here is no time for conferring with flesh and blood. At once, conquer or perish!

19. Let us turn the tables. Suppose a woman that loves God, is addressed by an agreeable man, genteel, lively, entertaining, suitable in all other respects, though not religious: what should she do in such a case? What she *should* do, if she believes the Bible, is sufficiently clear. But what *can* she do? Is not this

"A test for human frailty too severe?"

Who is able to stand in such a trial? Who can resist such a temptation? None but one that holds fast the shield of faith, and earnestly

cries to the Strong for strength. None but one that gives herself to watching and prayer, and continues therein with all perseverance. If she does this, she will be a happy witness in the midst of an unbelieving world, that as "all things are possible with God," so all "things are possible to her that believeth."

20. But either a man or woman may ask, "What, if the person who seeks my acquaintance be a person of a strong natural understanding, cultivated by various learning? May not I gain much useful knowledge by a familiar intercourse with him? May I not learn many things from him, and much improve my own understanding?" Undoubtedly you may improve your own understanding, and you may gain much knowledge. But still, if he has not, at least, the fear of God, your loss will be far greater than your gain. For you can hardly avoid decreasing in holiness as much as you increase in knowledge. And if you lose one degree of inward or outward holiness, all the knowledge you gain will be no equivalent.

21. "But his fine and strong understanding, improved by education, is not his chief recommendation. He has more valuable qualifications than these: he is remarkably good humoured: he is of a compassionate, humane spirit, and has much generosity in his temper." On these very accounts, if he does not fear God, he is infinitely more dangerous. If you converse intimately with a person of this character, you will surely drink into his spirit. It is hardly possible for you to avoid stopping just where he stops. I have found nothing so difficult in all my life, as to converse with men of this kind, (*good sort of men*, as they are commonly called,) without being hurt by them. O beware of them! Converse with them just as much as business requires, and no more: otherwise, (though you do not feel any present harm, yet,) by slow and imperceptible degrees, they will attach you again to earthly things, and damp the life of God in your soul.

22. It may be, the persons who are desirous of your acquaintance, though they are not experienced in religion, yet understand it well, so that you frequently reap advantage from their conversation. If this be really the case, (as I have known a few instances of the kind,) it seems you may converse with them: only very sparingly and very cautiously: otherwise you will lose more of your spiritual life, than all the knowledge you gain is worth.

23. "But the persons in question are useful to me, in carrying on my temporal business. Nay, on many occasions, they are necessary to me, so that I could not well carry it on without them." Instances of this kind frequently occur. And this is doubtless a sufficient reason for having some intercourse, perhaps frequently, with men that do not fear God. But even this is by no means a reason for your contracting an intimate acquaintance with them. And you here need to take the utmost care, "lest even by that converse with them which is necessary, while your fortune in the world increases, the grace of God should decrease in your soul."

24. There may be one more plausible reason given for some inti-

macy with an unholy man. You may say, "I have been helpful to him. I have assisted him when he was in trouble. And he remembers it with gratitude. He esteems and loves *me*, though he does not love God. Ought I not then to love *him?* Ought I not to return love for love? Do not even heathens and publicans so?" I answer, you should certainly return love for love; but it does not follow, that you should have any intimacy with him. That would be at the peril of your soul. Let your love give itself vent in constant and fervent prayer: wrestle with God for him. But let your love for him not carry you so far, as to weaken, if not destroy, your own soul.

25. "But must I not be intimate with my relations? And that, whether they fear God or not? Has not his Providence recommended these to me?" Undoubtedly it has: but there are relations, nearer or more distant. The nearest relations are husbands and wives. As these have taken each other, for better or worse, they must make the best of each other; seeing as God has joined them together, none can put them asunder; unless in case of adultery: or when the life of one or the other is in imminent danger. Parents are almost as nearly connected with their children. You cannot part with them while they are young; it being your duty, to "train them up" with all care, "in the way wherein they should go." How frequently you should converse with them when they are grown up, is to be determined by Christian prudence. This also will determine, how long it is expedient for children, if it be at their own choice, to remain with their parents. In general, if they do not fear God, you should leave them as soon as is convenient. But wherever you are, take care, (if it be in your power,) that they do not want the necessaries or conveniences of life. As for all other relations, even brothers or sisters, if they are of the world, you are under no obligation to be intimate with them: you may be civil and friendly at a distance.

26. But allowing that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and consequently that it is the most excellent way, indeed the only way to heaven, to avoid all intimacy with worldly men; yet who has resolution to walk therein? Who even of those that love or fear God? For these only are concerned in the present question. A few I have known, who, even in this respect, were lights in a benighted land: who did not and would not either contract or continue any acquaintance, with persons of the most refined and improved understanding, and the most engaging tempers, merely because they were of the world, because they were not alive to God. Yea, though they were capable of improving them in knowledge, or assisting them in business. Nay, though they admired and esteemed them for that very religion which they did not themselves experience: a case one would hardly think possible, but of which there are many instances at this day. Familiar intercourse even with these, they steadily and resolutely refrain from, for conscience' sake.

27. Go thou and do likewise, whosoever thou art, that art a child of God by faith. Whatever it cost, flee spiritual adultery. Have

no friendship with the world. However tempted thereto by profit or pleasure, contract no intimacy with worldly-minded men. And it thou hast contracted any such already, break it off without delay. Yea, if thy ungodly friend be dear to thee as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, yet confer not with flesh and blood, but pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from thee! It is not an indifferent thing. Thy life is at stake: eternal life or eternal death. And is it not better to go into life, having one eye or one hand, than having both, to be cast into hell-fire? When thou knewest no better, the times of ignorance God winked at. But now thine eyes are opened, now the light is come, walk in the light. Touch not pitch, lest thou be defiled. At all events, *keep thyself pure!*

28. But whatever others do, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, hear this, all ye that are called Methodists. However importuned or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. Look round, and see the melancholy effects it has produced among your brethren! How many of the mighty are fallen! How many have fallen by this very thing! They would take no warning: they *would* converse, and that intimately, with earthly-minded men, till "they measured back their steps to earth again!" O "come out from among them!" from all unholy men, however harmless they may appear; "and be ye separate:" at least, so far as to have no intimacy with them. As your "fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" so let it be with those, and those only, who at least seek the Lord Jesus in sincerity. So "shall ye be," in a peculiar sense, "my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

END OF VOLUME SIX.